

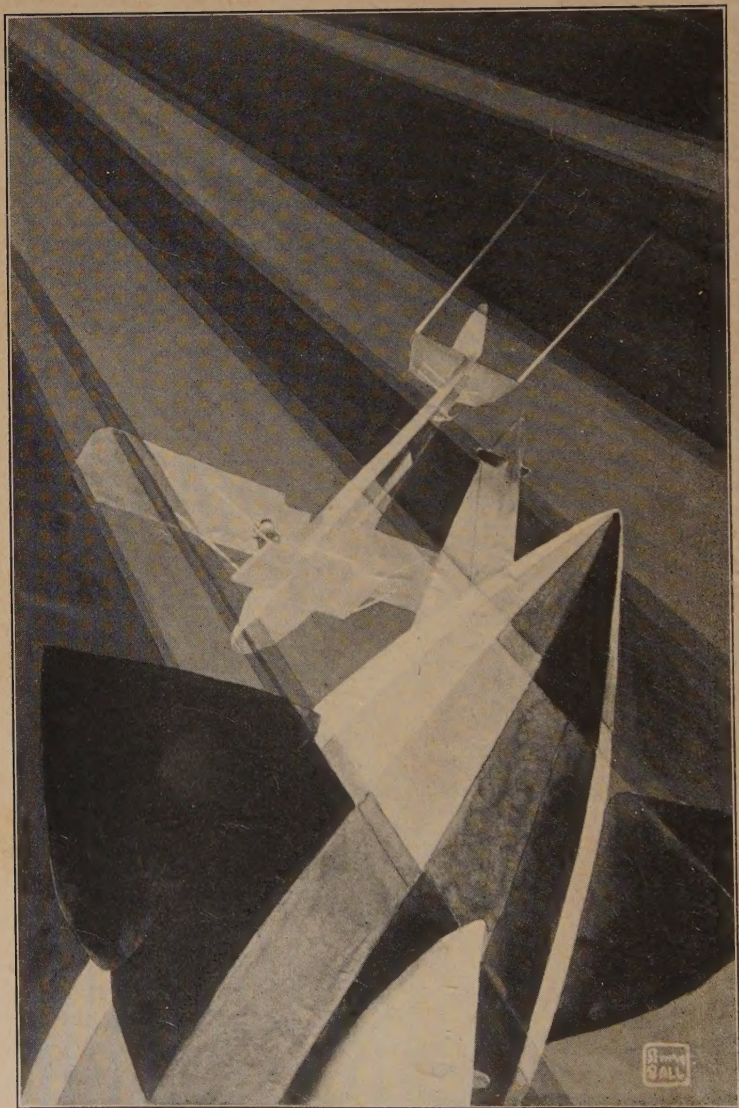
THE RUNAWAY AIRSHIP



An
ANDY LANE
Story

EUSTACE L. ADAMS

for 8/11/17



ANDY CROUCHED AND PREPARED TO LEAP.
The Runaway Airship. Frontispiece (Page 120)

THE RUNAWAY AIRSHIP

BY
EUSTACE L. ADAMS

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FIFTEEN DAYS IN THE AIR
OVER THE POLAR ICE
RACING AROUND THE WORLD



GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS :: NEW YORK

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THE RUNAWAY AIRSHIP

CHAPTER I

THE GREATEST AIRSHIP DISAPPEARS

THE new transatlantic passenger airship "Britain" pulled and tugged at her mooring mast as the first blast of wind shrieked across the mile-long landing field. Although her mighty bulk was fastened by the bow to the latticework mast, her stern rose and fell like a canoe in mid-ocean. Her entire 1,000 foot length trembled and vibrated as she pivoted back and forth like a gigantic weathervane. Now and then the rudders and flippers at her stern were almost dashed into the ground as she bucked and plunged. The hundreds of men who clung to long ropes in an effort to hold her steady were tossed about as by the cracking of a giant's whip.

Every window in the passenger building at

the foot of the mast was crowded with spectators who watched the labored struggles of the air monster with horror. She was as clearly visible in the rays of the dozens of search- and flood-lights as if it had been broad daylight. The lucky ones who had pushed themselves close to the windows could see the full length of her tremendous hull as the wind tore at her envelope with a million fleecy fingers. Jagged flashes of vivid lightning and crashing, rolling claps of thunder added their bit to the amazing unreality of the scene.

Within the snug waiting room nearly a hundred passengers pushed and shoved each other for places nearest to the windows. Passengers who had paid tremendous prices for the privilege of embarking on the "Britain" upon her first return trip to London and who, had it not been for the unexpected thunderstorm which had suddenly whirled out of the west, would have been at this very minute in those comfortable cabins, the windows of which were even now shining with soft-shaded lights.

Upon a circular platform twenty feet below the mooring ring which held the airship's sil-

very nose to the mast, a dozen officers, spic-and-span in their new uniforms of blue and gold, anxiously awaited an opportunity to leap into the open alleyway which was cut into the bow of the plunging ship. Before the squall, a covered, carpeted gang-plank had led from the platform to the interior corridor of the "Britain," but the first great heave of the airliner had jerked it from its place. Now it extended a few feet beyond the edge of the platform, pointing into empty air, and at its very end stood Captain MacNiel, crouched and ready to spring if the open port of his ship should swing sufficiently close.

"Watch your chance, Mr. Arnold," he called over his shoulder to his First Officer. "If she stops her bucking and swings in close to the platform, follow me. We'll cast loose from the ring and try to ride out the blow. We'll start a couple of motors and have more than half a chance of bringing her back safely."

Since leaving Croydon, the air port of London, a week before, the "Britain" had been left without a single man of her crew aboard for only five minutes. And it had been during

those very five minutes that the midsummer squall had swooped down upon her and was now threatening her with destruction.

The people of the entire United States had been amazed and delighted when, four days before, the greatest passenger-carrying dirigible had sailed majestically over New York, carrying within her mighty bulk one hundred passengers and many sacks of registered mail. Upon her arrival at the landing field at Lakehurst, New Jersey, the daring travellers who had been so fortunate as to have crossed in her upon her maiden flight gave glowing interviews to the newspaper men describing the comforts and the luxuries aboard the magnificent airship. They were enchanted with her beautiful staterooms, her superb dining saloon, her fireproof smoking room, her two tiers of promenade decks and, above all, her swift, steady course through the skies which had made possible a voyage from London to New York in two days instead of the five required by the fastest steamships.

There had been an immediate scramble for

bookings on her return journey. Foresighted passengers who had bought berths at the first announcement of her flight held tight to their precious tickets or sold them for many times what they had cost. One man who had paid \$3,000 for a berth sold it to an eager millionaire for \$6,000.

Even the news that a West Indian hurricane was ravaging Cuba and the southeastern coast of Florida did not frighten those who bid for the hundred berths on the trip. Could the "Britain" not pick her own path through North Atlantic skies? Undoubtedly. With her five 500 horsepower motors she could outfly any storm and choose her route through untroubled air.

The scene before sailing time was one of tremendous enthusiasm. Thousands had journeyed to the field to see her departure. Bands had played stirring marches and the British and American national anthems. Fireworks had mingled with the dazzling beams of the searchlights in making the night as light as day. Jagged flashes of heat lightning on the

westward horizon had meant little. Once underway the fast "Britain" would leave the thunderstorm far behind.

Just before the first load of eager passengers was to be lifted in a plush-lined elevator to the loading platform, a member of the President's Cabinet arrived. It was planned that he should make a second speech of christening, an official welcome and God-speed from the government. He was to present Captain MacNiel with a letter from the President of the United States to the King of England. So, in view of the importance of this event, the entire crew of the air liner was summoned to the foot of the mast to stand at attention during the ceremony.

And then, with a suddenness that was almost unbelievable, the storm struck. It whirled across the field with such force that there could be no boarding the ship until the wind should die down. There was nothing for the white-faced captain to do but to stand with his officers at the end of the useless gangway and await his opportunity to return to his post.

There was a moment's lull in the storm. The open port swung closer and closer to the plat-

form. Captain MacNiel crouched, every muscle tensed for the leap. Then, with an ear-splitting shriek, came a blast of wind which made the mooring mast tremble in every steel girder. There was the sound of cracking metal and of tearing fabric. In the next moment the officers found themselves peering out into the rainsoaked night. The "Britain," her mooring ring torn out by its very roots, was gone, careening off on the wings of the wind.

The ground crew, who were scattered in every direction by the whipping ropes, looked up to see the brilliantly lighted cabins on the under side of the tremendous envelope slide silently over their heads as the air liner began her long voyage into the unknown. As the passenger cabins whisked by, the workmen below stared up in amazement. For there, outlined plainly against the lighted windows, were the frightened faces of three men.

Three men! And every passenger, every officer, every man of the crew had been accounted for on the mooring mast or in the passenger house at its base! The guards posted at the entrance to the elevator were positive

that no strangers had been allowed to go up to the platform. It seemed impossible that anyone should have slipped aboard unseen. Yet a hundred witnesses agreed that three men were most certainly aboard the "Britain" as she was swept away. Who were they? Before the mystery was finally solved, it was to attract the spellbound attention of the entire world.

CHAPTER II

ANDY LISTENS TO THE RADIO

IN THE living room of a comfortable house in Hillside, a suburb of New York City, a radio announcer's voice was droning flatly from a loudspeaker.

“——the ‘Britain’ was as long as two city blocks, ladies and gentlemen of the invisible audience. She was fitted with every possible luxury and convenience. After several successful trial trips over Europe and the northern part of Africa, she had made her first passenger voyage to this country without trouble and had arrived exactly upon schedule.

“Her previous performances and her westward trip had been so satisfactory that the great American banking house of J. R. Moffett and Son had no hesitation in placing aboard her bullion to the amount of five million dollars which was part of a loan to the British Government. This gold was secretly loaded

aboard the 'Britain' not five minutes before she was blown away from her mast.

"Officials of the banking house are, at this moment, conferring with officers of the War, Navy and Treasury Departments to make plans for the rescue of the ship, bullion and the three unfortunate men who were carried away in the air liner.

"Well-known aviators, however, who are here at the field, express doubt that the 'Britain' will ever be found. She was blown to the eastward and is now, undoubtedly, drifting straight into the path of the hurricane which is sweeping out to sea in a northeasterly direction from Cape Hatteras.

"We will broadcast additional bulletins as information of interest is received. In the meantime, we will switch you back to the studio where the Danceland orchestra is playing an hour of popular music. The first number will be——"

The older of the two boys who had been listening with spellbound interest switched off the set with a gesture of impatience. His keen blue

eyes shone with excitement and his mouth was set in a grim, thoughtful line. He glanced at the younger boy who was watching him through great horn-rimmed spectacles and at his father and mother, at the other end of the room, who seemed just as excited by the bulletins as he.

"Sonny," he said at last, "it looks as though the old crew might take another little hop!"

"Andy Lane!" burst out Mrs. Lane, her face suddenly looking very troubled. "You don't mean to say you are thinking of making another of your addle-brained flights, do you?"

The world's most famous young aviator smiled at his little pal, Sonny Collins, then walked over and patted his mother on the shoulder.

"Mother," he laughed, "I should think you would have become used to our long hops by this time. I didn't blame you for being worried when we stayed in the air for fifteen days without coming down on our first big flight. But when we flew all the way to the South Pole and back without an accident and then flew completely around the world in the great race,

it ought to have proved to you that we are as safe in the air as we are here in this living room."

"Well, I declare," sputtered Mrs. Lane, who wished her famous boy had never seen an airplane, "you'll be telling me next that this house will loop the loop, or something, and that we'd better get into your airplane to be safe!"

"What are you thinking of doing, son?" asked Mr. Lane, quietly. He, too, worried about Andy, but whenever his eyes drifted to the great bookcase filled full of medals, loving cups and scores and scores of presents from almost every nation in the world, he realized that his boy was too famous, too well loved by the whole world, to be kept on the ground. He had become a noted figure since his first marvellous hop and the world expected great things from him. So he, his father, had little right to clip his wings.

"I think we ought to go out in the brand new 'Apex,' " answered Andy, seriously, "to try to find the 'Britain.' "

"Whoops!" yelled Sonny. "You've got to take me. You promised when I worked the

radio on the round the world flight, that I could go on the next hop, too. How about it, Scotty, you flying pup?"

A gangling collie puppy who had been snoozing on Sonny's lap heard his name and jumped up so suddenly that he fell to the floor and growled ferociously. Then, by way of revenge for his tumble, he nipped his friend Sonny on the ankle. At last he quieted down, jumped back into the boy's lap and before settling to sleep again looked reproachfully around the room as though the whole proceeding had been very undignified.

"Of course you'll go, ivory head, unless you've forgotten how to tap a radio key! I couldn't get along without you."

"Andy," said Mr. Lane, slowly, "it's pretty hard for me to see how you are going to find the 'Britain' and if you do find her, to do anything about rescuing her. She'll either be at the bottom of the sea or floating in the air where she would be just about as hard to do anything for her."

"Of course you're right, dad," agreed Andy, seriously, "but there must be some way of do-

ing it. The newest 'Apex' is the best equipped ship in the world for such a flight. We have a trained crew that could fly her anywhere and back. There's just one other thing that you've all forgotten."

"What's that?" demanded fifteen-year-old Sonny, who was quite sure he could not have forgotten anything.

"The reward. There will probably be some whacking big rewards offered for anyone who can rescue the ship, her five millions in gold and her passengers."

"What on earth do you want more money for, Andy Lane?" demanded his mother. "We all have more money right now than we know what to do with. The carburetor jigger that you and your father invented is making us all rich and every big flight that you've made has brought us in more money. The salary, alone, that you draw from the Apex Company for doing next to nothing at all is simply scandalous!"

"I know, mother," replied her son patiently, "but in this case, my share of the reward would go to the company to put through a favorite

scheme of mine. Come on, Sonny, let's go up to my room and get out the atlas and a few of the charts we've used on other trips. We'll be down in a little while, mother," he added, "and if you have any cakes or pie I'll bet we could eat a couple of tons of them!"

CHAPTER III

ON BOARD THE PIRATE SHIP

AT THE very moment when Andy Lane and Sonny Collins had been listening to the thrilling announcement of the "Britain's" unexpected departure, a slim, rakish steam yacht was swinging lazily in the long rollers more than 1,500 miles out in the Atlantic Ocean. Even a landlubber could have told that the "Wanderer" was capable of tremendous speed. She resembled a businesslike destroyer far more than a pleasure boat. She had a high forecastle, long, clean lines, two slanting wireless masts and a pair of thick, squat funnels. At the moment, however, she seemed to be in no hurry, for she was drifting along under just enough power to keep steerage way upon her.

In a magnificent smoking room three men in yachting caps and jackets were listening silently to the same radio announcement which had inspired Andy Lane to plan for a new

long-distance flight. The yachtsmen heard the message through to the end. Then, as the announcer gave the name of the dance tune about to be played, a short, overstout man of about fifty rose and snapped off the superhetrodyne.

"Well," he said, facing his two companions, "it looks to me as though that message had cost us just five million dollars! A cool, clean, five millions bucks, and all because we're a bunch of saps!"

"What do you mean, saps, Mueller?" demanded a tall, sleek man who sat at the far end of the long mahogany table.

"Just what I said, Jennings. It all looked so easy that we fell for Brewster's plan like a ton of bricks. When a thing sounds too easy, don't touch it, that's always been my motto until this time. Then I slip up, just once, and I lose my whole roll. Yes, sir, my whole roll!"

"Oh, shut up and take your medicine!" snapped the third, who had listened to the announcement and to the regrets of his companion without a change of expression. "We're all in the same boat, so there's no use moaning about it. There wasn't a single thing the mat-

ter with Brewster's plan. The 'Britain' was carrying the gold just as he said, wasn't she? And she was due to fly right over the spot where we are this minute, wasn't she? There wasn't a thing impossible about Brewster and his two buddies holding her up, making her fly over this yacht and dropping the money right down on our deck."

"Ah, that's boloney!" snarled Mueller. "I've pulled lots of tricks in my day and never slipped up once but I've always been suspicious when things looked too good. Sure, Brewster and his pals could have pulled their guns and held her up, made her fly over us and dropped the gold. Then, just as he planned, they could have busted her engines with sledge hammers and let her drift with the wind while we made our getaway. It all sounded pretty smooth and that's why I put up my share of the pot to buy this yacht. But still I say it was too good."

"Well, I had my doubts from the first," said Jennings. "Brewster may be the best airplane pilot in the world, but he's a bungler and has never made a success of anything. Look at the

way he let that kid Andy Lane lick him three times in a row! Think of that, will you, an eighteen year old kid putting it over on a grown man like that!"

"Andy Lane's got a head on him," said the third man. "He'd have to have, to do the things in the air he's done. There's no use crying over spilled milk, you birds, and—" He was suddenly interrupted by the wireless man, who entered the cabin, saluted and passed him a slip of paper. He read the message and, for the first time during the voyage, looked startled out of his usual calm.

"What is it, Hanson?" demanded Jennings who had been watching him impatiently and seemed to sense something unusual.

"A message—or part of one—from Brewster! It came from the 'Britain' on our secret short wave length, so it's no fake. All it says is, 'Hanson stand by.' That's a hot one, isn't it? Stand by for what?"

Jennings snatched the paper from the other's hands and read it again and again. He could hardly believe that it was actually from Herbert Brewster, who had turned crook in order

to steal the five million dollars aboard the air liner.

"Sparks," said Hanson quietly, "tell the captain to remain near this spot until further orders."

"Sir," replied the radio man uncertainly, "we've been picking up weather reports from Arlington all day. All vessels in this part of the ocean are warned to prepare for a hurricane. I don't think this yacht is built to stand a real West Indian hurricane, sir."

"Listen, boy," replied the leader of the pirates, "are you so afraid of a little spell of rough weather that you're willing to pass up your share of five million dollars? If you are, you'd better take one of the ship's boats and row yourself back to land. It's only 1,500 miles, you know."

"No sir, I'll stick with the ship."

"Good. Now give the captain my message."

CHAPTER IV

ANDY MAKES HIS PLANS

RONALD AVERY, President of the Apex Aeroplane and Motor Company, entered his office the following morning in a very thoughtful mood. His partner, David Collins, who was also Sonny's father, was already at his desk, working hard on a mass of correspondence.

"Did you hear the announcements over the radio last night, David?" he asked, as Mr. Collins looked up from his work.

"You bet I did! When Sonny came home from Andy Lane's house, he and I sat up half the night listening to bulletins about the lost dirigible. Phew, it was an exciting night!"

"It certainly was. I'm afraid it's going to cost us a lot of business."

"Why? We don't make balloons!"

"David, we're in the aviation business. Of course we make airplane engines and planes, but every time any bad accident occurs in the

air, it hurts the entire business. Here's the 'Britain,' the greatest, fastest, finest dirigible of the Zeppelin type. At the end of its very first passenger flight, it goes off in a storm and is probably lost. It's sure to slow up the entire industry. It's a shame it had to happen just as we were about to launch into new and greater things, too!"

"You think we should postpone starting our new passenger and mail line from New York to Havana?"

"I certainly do," replied the president, "until we see what effect this 'Britain' affair has upon the public."

"Look!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Collins, staring out of the window. "Here comes Andy Lane!"

Sliding down from the sky to the Mineola landing field just outside the factory window was a beautiful silver-colored monoplane, shining in the rays of the sun and glistening with polished nickel. It came to earth in a perfect three-point landing and out of the cockpit jumped Andy Lane. He reached up and lifted the famous flying pup Scotty out of his own

special little cockpit and placed him on the grass. Then boy and collie marched toward the office door while two mechanics from the factory began to examine the plane's motor and controls.

"Hello, Mr. Avery," smiled Andy, "Hello, Mr. Collins. Did you hear the radio announcements last night?"

"Sit down, Andy," said Mr. Avery, shaking hands with the bronzed, broad-shouldered youth who had helped to bring the Apex Aeroplane Company from a tiny, struggling concern to the greatest organization in the business. "I'll say we listened to the broadcasting! I'm afraid it's postponed your pet idea."

"Wait 'till I tell you what Sonny and I cooked up last night."

"I thought the kid had something on his mind when he came home!" laughed Mr. Collins. "But since he seemed to want to keep it a secret, I didn't try to pump him."

"I told him that I'd skin him alive if he told a soul before I had a chance to talk it over with you both," said Andy with a grin. Then, growing very serious, he hunched his chair

closer to the two older men. "I don't know whether you made me a vice-president of this company with a big salary just to loaf or to do some real work. But, taking it for granted that I was to work, I planned the air line from here to Havana for two reasons. One, to increase the use of Apex planes and engines and, two, to demonstrate the foolishness and the danger of making long flights across water in a land plane or across land in a sea plane.

"So, at my advise, you built the third 'Apex,' the biggest amphibian in the world, a flying boat that is able to land on both land and water.

"To cut a long story short, I want to take her, with the crew that went around the world with me, and go after the 'Britain.'"

"What?" The two men looked as if they thought Andy had gone completely out of his mind.

"Yes, go after the 'Britain,'" repeated Andy. "In the first place, I really think we can find the 'Britain' and rescue the three unlucky men in her. If there's a chance of that, I think we really ought to try. In the second place, it will attract the entire attention of the

world to the new Apex amphibian and, if we succeed, will make our new air route a success from the very first flight."

"But no one has an idea in the world where the 'Britain' may be right now," protested Mr. Collins. "How do you expect to be able to find her?"

"The weather authorities will be able to tell us exactly where the hurricane is going, won't they?"

Both men nodded.

"Well, the 'Britain' will be somewhere in the track of the storm. If we can arrange with the Superior Oil Company to refuel the 'Apex' in the air, we'll be able to fly back and forth across the track of the hurricane until we've found her, or someone else has found her, or it's known that she has gone down with all hands."

"There wouldn't be any trouble arranging with the oil company, Andy," said Mr. Avery positively. "The flights you've already made have just about tripled the use of their aviation gasoline and oils all over the world. Mr. Seymore, the president, was telling me only

the other day that he would cooperate in any big flight you wished to make.”

“Well, then,” smiled Andy, “that removes about the last obstacle, doesn’t it? You can’t use the new ‘Apex’ right now for the passenger line, so why not use her for rescue work? We could put her in shape in a day. We know just what a big flight needs in the way of supplies, equipment, and everything. We have the crew and are better equipped than even the army or the navy to do the job right.”

“I suppose that you’ll want Sonny again to act as radio operator, won’t you?” asked Mr. Collins, his eyes clouding a little as he thought of his only boy, scarcely older than a child, taking part in another of Andy’s hazardous expeditions.

“You bet!” exclaimed Andy. “We couldn’t get along without him.”

The older man sighed. Of course he did not intend to prevent his boy from going. He knew that the slender, bespectacled little lad would really be of tremendous assistance to the rest of the crew. In his three or four years of experimenting with radio, during which time he

had made friends with thousands of amateur radio fans all over the world, the fifteen year old boy had become more expert in short-wave work than most professional operators.

During Andy's flight to the South Pole, it had been Sonny, at the base at the Bay of Whales, who had guided the second "Apex" to victory with his direction finding set and had, through a chain of amateurs, kept in constant touch with the great flying boat from the moment it had left New York. And during the marvellous race around the world, Sonny had gone along and had more than once saved the ship from disaster. Yes, he would have to let the boy go.

"All right, Andy, if Sonny wants to go, he may."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the famous young pilot. "And now, Mr. Avery, what do you say? May we take the big amphibian?"

"Well," said the president, "since you are a vice-president of this company, I guess you'll have to work for your salary." His eyes twinkled as he added, "If you think you can do some good by making the flight, go to it!"

“Attaboy!” whooped the flier. “I must beat it now and break the news to the old crew and tell them what to do to get ready. Then I’ll have to see Mr. Seymore about refuelling in the air and we’ll be all set to go. I hope we can start tomorrow morning.”

CHAPTER V

ON THE MORNING OF THE TAKE-OFF

THE "Britain" had started on her wild ride into the unknown at ten o'clock on the evening of August 10. The following day will long be remembered in the newspaper business. All day long presses over the entire world ran at full speed, stopping only to insert fresh bulletins in their endless succession of extras. Hoarse, shouting newsboys ran through the streets of hundreds of cities, waving their fresh, ink-smeared editions at the crowds who scrambled for copies to learn the last-minute news of the ill-fated airship and her cargo of men and gold.

In Washington and in London little groups of serious-faced men sat around long tables, planning ways and means of recovering the ship and her precious freight.

From scores of army fields and naval air stations in the United States and in Great

Britain powerful airplanes, flying boats and blimps thundered out to search the Atlantic.

At the United States Naval Air Station at Lakehurst workmen exerted every effort to speed up the rebuilding of the dirigible "Los Angeles," which had been partially disassembled for the replacing of some new and heavier framework within her great envelope.

From navy yards and coast guard bases on both sides of the Atlantic lean, gray destroyers, high-bowed cutters, long, powerful scout cruisers and even ponderous battleships rushed out to sea, their crews busy getting everything tight on deck lest havoc be created by the hurricane into which they were heading.

On the bridges of great transatlantic grayhounds and of tiny, rusty tramps extra lookouts were placed to watch sky and water for any sign of the missing leviathan of the air.

In thousands of homes all over the world young men and boys listened over complicated receiving sets, straining their tired ears to the soft, hissing dot-dot-dash of code which told of the efforts being made on ship and shore for the rescue of the "Britain." These amateur

radio fans forgot school, business, food and sleep while their earphones chattered the most thrilling signals they had ever heard.

In millions of homes throughout the world, men, women and children listened in front of loudspeakers while hoarse and sleepless announcers described rescue events as they occurred. All regular broadcasting programs were halted every fifteen minutes while the latest bulletins were given to the waiting millions.

But of the "Britain" herself there was not one whisper of trustworthy information. She had disappeared from the eyes of the watchers at Lakehurst and from the sight of the world at the same time. It was as though a chalk picture had been wiped off a blackboard with a wet sponge.

She had disappeared and that was all that was definitely known. Of course there were the usual wild rumors. She had been reported drifting over Atlantic City, Boston and Newfoundland. It was even reported that she had been blown over a small fishing village on the southern coast of Greenland. But after a care-

ful checking of the known facts, each of these rumors had been proved to be false.

On the morning of the 12th, there was a brief announcement by the Bank of England that a reward of one million dollars would be paid to the lucky person or persons who recovered the missing gold. The British Air Ministry announced another reward of \$100,000 to the person or persons who recovered the ship herself practically undamaged, although the announcement stated frankly that this condition was considered almost impossible of fulfillment. Ten thousand dollars more was offered to those who first reported her exact position. There were a half-dozen private rewards, totalling nearly \$20,000, for anyone who should rescue the three unknown passengers alive.

A total of \$1,130,000 for recovery of ship, passengers and cargo intact! A fabulous sum!

The broad, dusty expanse of the flying field at Mineola, a few miles from New York, was a scene of intense activity. Almost every pilot who owned an airplane of any kind was filling up its tanks and flying out to sea in a desperate hope that he might find the "Britain" and

notify the government of its location, thus earning \$20,000, at least, of the immense rewards.

Far over at one side of the field was a long, two-story factory, on the side of which was an immense sign proclaiming it to be the home of the Apex Aeroplane and Motor Company. Although it was yet early in the morning, a great crowd milled about the entrance, for the radio stations had broadcast the thrilling news at breakfast time that the nation's young hero, Andy Lane, would take off before noon in search of the "Britain." That had aroused the people to the most tremendous enthusiasm, for nearly everyone in the entire country had either seen Andy and his valiant crew take off or return from a thrilling flight, or had listened to the scarcely less exciting radio broadcasting of their adventures in the air.

The highways leading from New York to the field swarmed with cars. Motorcycle policemen dashed here and there, directing the traffic and the parking. They knew from experience that when Andy Lane took the air, there was work for all hands in holding the crowds at bay.

A huge tri-motored Fokker droned over the field and slid down to a landing. Upon the side, in black letters, were the words, "Superior Oil and Gas Co."

"Look, dad!" cried a small boy, an ardent "Andy Lane fan," "there's the airplane that fills the 'Apex' with gas and oil in the air. And, look, see that man getting out and walking toward the factory! That, dad, is Mr. Seymore, president of the oil company. I've seen him with Andy Lane in the movies of the big flights!"

There was a tremendous roar from the crowd. Andy's silvered monoplane swung down in a great, lazy spiral and landed far out in mid-field. A score of motorcycle officers dashed across the grass, their side cars filled with police who immediately surrounded the famous pilot and his plane. In a few moments four of the escort roared back toward the factory, with Andy Lane and the collie pup riding in a side car. The youth grinned bashfully and waved as the crowd whooped and yelled when he passed the massed bystanders. Although this was an old story to him, he had

never become quite used to being a public hero. He hated to have crowds tag after him, saying, "Look, there's Andy Lane!" Although he loved to fly, he hated the publicity that went with it. He hated the purring noise of the movie cameras that greeted him everywhere he went.

Even in college his reputation made it difficult for him to lead a normal life. He had, of course, brought great fame to Newton College, and every fraternity on the campus was rushing him—had rushed him, in fact, ever since he had returned to his classes after establishing the remarkable duration record of fifteen days and nights in the air without once coming to the ground. But Andy remembered that the clubs had not been so anxious to enroll him when he had been a poor boy, spending three afternoons a week in greasy overalls working at the village garage. With that in his memory, he had steadfastly refused to join any fraternity now that he was almost rich and very, very popular.

Although the young flier grinned and waved back to the cheering crowds and although he,

himself, was almost as excited as the onlookers at the prospect of another great flight, his heart was heavy, for he had just said good-by to his father and mother, and that was always a difficult thing to do. Mother, although she had fussed and fumed at her boy starting out again, had, as usual, packed his winter flannels and filled a bottle with pills for a cold. She had even started to put a hot water bottle in his suitcase before he had discovered it and laughingly persuaded her that he would have no use for it. She had been dry eyed when he had kissed her good-by, but he knew that she was probably crying at this very minute. Good old Dad, he had understood the meaning of the flight far better than Mother and had shaken his son's hand warmly when he left and had wished him "God-speed" with the same heartiness as on each of the three previous occasions.

The side car made a swinging turn before the door of the factory and Andy and Scotty dashed inside to escape the pushing, shoving crowds which had strained the police lines almost to bursting. The boy, as he passed through the offices into the factory proper, re-

alized that every time he started a flight, the factory was larger and more prosperous-looking than it had been the time before. The growth was more evident now than ever before. At the conclusion of the race around the world, Mr. Avery and Mr. Collins, who had been business rivals, fighting tooth and nail for orders for engines and planes, had finally agreed to pool their two companies into one gigantic organization.

Since Andy and Sonny were pals and worked together on these flights, it had not seemed right for Sonny's father to be fighting the backer of Andy's flights. So now, with both businesses under one roof, the growth was startling. And although Andy was not the slightest bit conceited, he knew that a large part of the expansion was the result of his flights. That fact gave him more pleasure than almost any other result of his expeditions.

Of course, he had enjoyed being comparatively wealthy, for there had been little pleasure in being poor. It was fun having enough money so that his parents could move into a fine new house and so that he could have a private

landing field and hangar right in back of his home. Yes, that was wonderful, but he wished, sometimes, that the crowds didn't tag along after him and that he could have the privacy that other eighteen year old boys enjoyed. Well, he realized, one couldn't have everything!

As he passed through the machine shop and the rigging and woodworking rooms, another great cheer went up from the factory hands who were proud of the boy who flew the ships they had made with such loving care. He waved back at them cordially. They were a wonderful lot. If it were not for the great care they put into their work, he might have been dashed to his death a dozen times.

In the next room, dozens and dozens of planes were being assembled for delivery. Over in a corner were two great ships that towered over the others as an elephant overtowers a bull dog. Andy's eyes fell on them fondly. He wished he had not been in such a hurry, for he would have liked to have gone over and said "good-by" to them, too. One was the first "Apex," that magnificent land plane which had held him in the air until he had smashed the

duration record into a million bits. It had been that plane which had really started him on his great career.

The other, a great flying boat, had done even more wonderful things, for it had been she that Andy and his crew had flown from New York to the South Pole and return in spite of the efforts of his old enemy, Herbert Brewster. A little later, she had won the great race around the world against the fastest and finest planes that had ever been gathered together. Andy gave them a last grateful look as he passed through the big door leading into the delivery room where stood the new planes which were ready to be flown away to their purchasers.

At the farther end, close by the great sliding doors, was the greatest amphibian plane ever built. Andy quickened his pace as he walked toward her, feeling his pulses pounding with excitement. Scotty, cavorting along at his side, seemed to feel the excitement, too, for he jumped about, growled and barked as though he could hardly wait to be in the air.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW "APEX"

THERE was more than mere size in the third great "Apex" to attract the eye. More than 150 feet from tip to tip of her single mammoth wing, she was shaped like a huge flying boat, with rows of port holes extending along the shining mahogany hull from a tiny open cockpit in her extreme bow nearly to her tail.

But instead of the usual unbroken sweeping curve of a flying boat's hull, there was, just in front of the wing braces on each side, a pair of wheels. These, now, supported the ship on their fat balloon tires, but at the slightest touch on a little lever in the pilots' compartment, the wheels could be drawn swiftly up into an enclosure within the hull and a shutter-like panel would slide down to restore the unbroken streamline effect to the hull. Thus the tremendous craft could land or take off on the water or upon the ground.

A swarm of men were putting the last touches on her hull, wings and motors. The first to greet Andy was Mr. Seymore, President of the Superior Oil and Gas Company, who was standing beneath the wings with Mr. Collins and Mr. Avery.

"Hello, Andy," he said, "that's the finest ship I've ever seen in my life. I'm half tempted to boss the refuelling operations from the cabin of the 'Apex' instead of from my office on Wall Street!"

"Wish you would, Mr. Seymore," laughed the boy. "Have you been inside her yet?"

"No, and your crew has been so busy that I haven't had a chance to shake hands with them."

"Good. Come on inside and say 'hello' to the boys."

The flier escorted the millionaire up the ladder leading to a door in the hull while the two officers of the Apex Company turned to supervise the last minute arrangements. As Andy and the oil magnate walked through a narrow corridor leading to the open cockpit in the bow, they almost bumped into Andy's chief

pilot, Joe Lamson, who wiped his hands on a bit of oily waste and gripped Mr. Seymore's outstretched palm most cordially. He was a tall, wiry young man of about twenty-five, who, in addition to being Andy's right hand man in the pilots' compartment was Chief Test Pilot for the Apex Company. There were few better pilots in the world than Joe Lamson for he seemed to have a sixth sense in the air.

After a brief chat, Joe excused himself, for he had not yet finished his last inspection of the control wires. As Andy and Mr. Seymore emerged in the open cockpit, the boy pointed out the various apparatus with pride.

"This, Mr. Seymore, would have been the open observation platform if we were using the ship for passenger carrying. Now we've turned it into the same kind of a refuelling cockpit we had on the first two ships. See this big funnel-shaped pipe? Beneath the floor, that pipe leads into half a dozen smaller pipes, each of which leads into one of the gas and oil tanks inside the wing. This smaller pipe goes to the tank which holds our drinking water. When your fuel plane drops oil and

gas into this big funnel, these small handles at the side direct the fuel into one tank or another, according to which tank needs filling. Here are the gauges which show the level of gas, oil and water in each."

After the oil man had inspected the ingenious arrangements in the cockpit, they passed through the corridor to the pilots' compartment, or control room. Two comfortable, upholstered seats faced an intricate instrument board upon which were arranged every possible kind of a gauge and gadget for simplifying the operation of the ship. Two big control wheels and a double set of rudder pedals enabled either pilot, or both, in an emergency, to fly the boat. Switches, throttles and the lever for raising and lowering the landing gear were placed between the two seats, so that they might be operated by either pilot at will.

The entire cabin was surrounded by double windows of non-shatterable safety glass. Even the roof, which was raised above the level of the rest of the hull, was a sort of canopy of heavy glass. Since the pilots' seats were also raised high above the floor, their heads were

higher than the deck level and they were thus given an unbroken view to the rear of the ship as well as to the front and sides.

A hinged table which could be swung around in front of the pilots already held well-worn navigation charts, parallel rules, dividers and a pencil.

In each corner of the control room was an electric heater. A pair of parachute packs hung in their places on the wall within easy reach of the pilots' hands.

"See, Mr. Seymore," Andy pointed out, "the double windows add safety and at the same time keep out cold and noise. The entire ship is lined with insulating material. When the windows are closed, you can hardly hear the three engines. You wouldn't believe a three-motored plane could be made so noiseproof."

Next behind the control room was a sort of living and dining room which extended the entire width of the hull. A drop table and comfortable wicker chairs, covered with bright cretonne, made the room seem more like the saloon of a million-dollar steam yacht than anything the oil man could think of. Andy

pulled down a panel in the wall. On the inner side was fastened a three-burner electric range. Another locker concealed cooking and eating utensils. A third was a tiny but fully equipped kitchen cabinet, everything so cleverly fitted together as to make it incredibly compact and convenient. A heavy blue carpet, well fastened down to prevent slipping, was upon the floor, adding much to the home-like appearance of the room. Two large photographs of the previous Apex wonderships on the wall completed the final touch. Mr. Seymore's eyes almost popped out of his head.

"I wouldn't have believed it!" he marvelled. "This room looks something like the cabin of your first Apex and even more like that on the round-the-world ship. But you've added a great deal here in the way of comfort and convenience. I'd like to have an air yacht like this for myself."

"I'm not a salesman for the company," laughed Andy, "but as a vice-president, I guess I can take your order. Maybe you'd better wait until we see how she flies on a long trip, though. She handled like a million dollars on

her test hops, but what she'll do after three or four days in the air remains to be seen."

The next three rooms, all of which opened on to a corridor running from the living room to the extreme stern of the ship, were staterooms, equipped with Pullman berths, lockers, folding desks, washstands and chairs. The fourth was the radio cabin and inside, forgetful of everything else in the world, was Sonny Collins, making the final adjustments on the short-wave set which he had installed next to the regular receiving and transmitting set which had been built into the ship.

"Hello, Sonny," called Mr. Seymore. The boy looked up and then rose to shake hands with the kindly millionaire.

"How do you do, Mr. Seymore," he said. "The radio is now ready to perk. I guess I had better go down and say good-by to dad before we go." With that, the shy lad scuttled down the corridor and out of sight.

"Isn't that a wonderful looking set?" asked Andy. "That kid can go through a few ash barrels, pick out a tin can or two and some other bits of rubbish, take them home and in

three hours have a set that will get Australia in broad daylight! But of course that's exaggerating a bit. His father keeps him supplied with the latest doo-hickeys as fast as they are invented. I don't believe that there are half a dozen amateurs in the world who have better stations than Sonny. This is his favorite set, he tells me. He expects to be able to get in touch with his brother nuts all over the world as soon as we get up in the air. That kid seems to know some radio bug in every country in the world. There wasn't a moment on our round the world flight when he wasn't talking to somebody right close to us. And, believe me, once or twice—it came pretty close to saving our lives!"

The next three cabins had been turned into locker rooms and, behind them, where the narrowing hull made more cabins impossible, locker after locker stretched to the extreme stern of the hull.

"These three cabins," explained Andy, "were for passengers, but we need the room on a trip like this for supplies. Look at these lockers. See, each one is numbered and has a

list of its contents pasted on the door. We know where everything is stored, so we can get our hands on it in a hurry."

The flier opened two of the smaller cupboards for Mr. Seymore's inspection. In the first was spare clothing, fleece lined coveralls, helmets and odds and ends of personal equipment. The second contained row after row of shelves, upon which were stacked boxes and cans of provisions.

"We have enough stuff stowed away," declared Andy, "to keep us alive for a month. Not only alive, but comfortable. We haven't had to sacrifice many luxuries."

"I don't see how you'll ever be able to take off with such a load," marvelled the oil man.

"We couldn't, of course," replied Andy, "except for our method of refuelling in the air. If we had to take on a full cargo of gas, the ship would be so heavy that we could never leave the ground. But the way we do it with your help, the take-off is a cinch. The ship, though, isn't really as heavy as she looks. These shelves, lockers, partitions and furniture are all made of balsa wood, which weighs

next to nothing at all. Come up, now, and see the motors."

They climbed through a hatchway in the roof of the living cabin and emerged on top of the tremendous single wing. Here, set in a row, were three mighty Apex engines, which, enclosed in their streamlined cowlings, looked powerful enough to lift the Woolworth Building from its foundations. There was a corrugated aluminum gangway, or catwalk, which led from the hatchway to, and around, each of the engines, and in front of each of these catwalks ran a low railing.

"Look at that rail," said Andy. "Our mechanics have long straps hitched to their safety belts. When they come up here during the flight to tune up the motors, they clip their straps to that railing and are able to walk along the wing without holding on to anything. They can use both hands at their work without the slightest chance of being blown off the wing.

"Like the other two big ships we flew in," he continued, "this ship is built so that she'll fly with two, or even one, engines. The three

are only used together in taking off, or in emergencies. Most of the time we fly with two motors, cutting out the third to allow the mechanics to go over it. We try to work it so each of the engines gets an equal amount of wear. The boys are sure handy with their hands and their tools while the ship is barging along at 100 miles an hour."

"Hello, Mr. Seymore!" There was a cheery hail and one of the four or five men who were working upon the motors left the others and came over to shake hands with the visitor. He had a laughing, jolly, freckled face, round as a moon, with a large grease spot on the tip end of his pug nose and another over his right eyebrow, which gave his whole face a rakish, jaunty appearance. He was much fatter than he should have been, but despite his weight, he was light footed and seemed as agile as an alley cat.

"Hello, Sam!" smiled the millionaire. "Have you plenty of food aboard the 'Apex'?"

"Nothing else *but*!" Sam Allen assured him. "I never did like hungry ships, either on the water or in the air, and I check the food that

comes aboard just as carefully as I do the engine parts." He turned towards the mechanics. "Hey, Dick, come here and shake hands with the man who feeds our motors!"

Dick Williams joined them, grinning broadly in his happiness and excitement. Sam and Dick were responsible for both motors and kitchen aboard the "Apex." Sam, the chief, was also head of the Motor Test Department of the Apex Company. There were few better men than he in the whole country for the job. Mr. Seymore wondered how a man of his weight could have stood on the wing, facing a 100 mile an hour wind in the bitter cold over the South Pole, nursing his beloved engines as though the "Apex" had been safe on the Mineola field.

Dick was his assistant at the factory and in the ship. He was almost as good as Sam at the kitchen, too, although, not being hungry all the time, he had not exactly the same interest in the work. Both were good hands at the radio; Dick especially, for he had been an operator on several steamships before making aviation mechanics his business and hobby. The pair were

a tower of strength to Andy, who realized that without them, he could never have accomplished the flights which had so astounded the world.

"Well," said Mr. Seymore, "those look like pretty good engines. Will they pull you through this time?"

"I'll tell the world!" exclaimed Sam enthusiastically. "They are even better than the other engines that we've used on our trips. With the system we have of flying them in turn, they'll take us wherever we want to go and back again. You see, Mr. Seymore, thirty to sixty hours of flying time is the most you can be sure of when the engine is roaring full-out all the time. But the way we use them is to run one for eight hours, then cut it out and go over it, every bolt, nut and spark plug. We catch troubles before they even start. In that way, we are able to make repairs in mid-flight that keep the motor fresh and young for over a thousand hours before it is really in bad shape."

Mr. Seymore had seen enough. He was

amazed. There was absolutely nothing new or revolutionary about the "Apex," except, perhaps, the refuelling device. The perfection of the mighty ship was simply in the making use of features which had, singly, each been proved practical. Now, when combined in one tremendous ship, the effect was startling. The "Apex" looked five years in advance of any other plane the oil man had even seen.

"Boys," he said seriously, "you're going to make the most wonderful hop that's ever been made, whether you find the missing dirigible or not. What report have you had from the Weather Bureau?"

"We had them on the long distance telephone half an hour ago," replied Andy. "They're going to radio another bulletin to us as soon as they can plot the track of the storm from the next reports received from warships and ocean liners. They say the hurricane has swept northward across the Grand Banks, skirted the southern coast of Greenland and, when last reported, seemed headed toward Iceland."

Three workmen came up through the hatch-

way and reported to Sam. Then the mechanic turned to Andy with a delighted expression on his round face.

“Well, skipper, we’re ready to shove off! Everything is inspected. The crew is all aboard, even our mascot, Scotty.”

“Mr. Seymore, are your refuelling planes ready?” asked Andy.

“Yes, son,” replied the older man. “I flew over here in the New York ship. Before leaving the office, our manager at St. Johns telegraphed that his ship was standing by. Our European planes will be ready long before you need them. Good luck, Andy, and God bless you!”

“Thanks, sir,” replied the young pilot. “I’ll go down with you and shake hands with Mr. Avery and Mr. Collins. You might as well tell your refuelling plane to take off. We’ll be in the air in a few minutes.”

CHAPTER VII

THE "APEX" TAKES THE AIR

WITH a tremendous roar from its three wide-open engines, the mighty "Apex" strained against her chocks at the lower end of the flying field. Dozens of motorcycle police raced back and forth along the runway, clearing a wide path for the take-off. Seven fast motor cars stood behind the airplane, their motors churning over, waiting to follow in her wake so that motion picture photographers might take pictures of her start.

Except for the three-motored ship which had taken off ten minutes before and was now soaring around and around the field at a thousand feet, all flying had been stopped. Pilots, mechanics and hangers-on mingled with the huge crowd that watched the "Apex" as she trembled and vibrated under her leashed power.

At last Andy Lane, who had been watching the preparations from a window in the pilots'

room, raised his hand in a signal that all was well. The waiting mechanics on the ground jerked the chocks away from the wheels and the mammoth ship trundled forward, lumbering awkwardly over the rutted ground. With each instant, however, she gathered speed until, to the amazement of the seasoned old-timers who were watching her, she leaped into the air in the distance usually required for tiny scout planes. Many of the watchers had doubted her ability to get off the ground at all. She looked too big and heavy to fly. Now she had broken all field records for large ships in her quick getaway.

Joe Lamson, at the wheel, cast a sidelong look of joy at Andy, who was just slipping into the other pilot's seat.

"Boy, that's going some, eh?" he laughed excitedly. "She's got the first two 'Apex' ships beaten to death!"

With only enough gasoline and oil in her great tanks for a few hours of flight, the amphibian gained altitude with surprising rapidity. The three engines snarled in perfect rhythm, much to the satisfaction of Sam

and Dick, who stood poised for action in the living room beneath the open hatch, their safety belts on, listening to every beat of the motors and ready to scramble up the ladder at the first sign of trouble.

Sonny, at his radio set, seemed not to know that the "Apex" was in the air. After his round the world flight, he had perfect confidence in ship and crew and paid no attention at all to the gentle heaving and swaying of the floor beneath his chair. With a tiny screw driver he was adjusting some gadget that failed to satisfy him. For all he seemed to care, the ship might as well have been on her hangar floor instead of just beginning the most momentous voyage in the history of aviation.

Scotty, however, was vastly excited. He seemed to know that something very unusual was going on. He ran back and forth through the entire length of the ship, barking now and then as if to reassure himself that he wasn't at all frightened. He was, of course, thoroughly at home in the tiny cockpit of Andy's own plane but it had been some time since he had flown on one of the big Apex cruisers. He sniffed here

and there, getting acquainted with everything. Finally, discovering his master's friend, Sonny, he cheered up. He nipped once or twice at the boy's leg and at last scrambled up into Sonny's berth and fell asleep.

"Gas, Sam!" yelled Andy, as Joe cut the center engine and throttled the other two down to 1,400 revolutions a minute. The stout little mechanic scuttled through the passageway like a plump rabbit into its hole. Then he reappeared in the open cockpit, looking about for the Fokker.

To the rear and slightly above the top wing of the "Apex" the great Fokker was wheeling into position. Her pilot throttled his engines until the speed of his plane exceeded that of the "Apex" by the slightest possible margin. Holding to a course which took him exactly over the top of the ship beneath, he forged ahead, inch by inch, until his bow was just over and a few feet ahead of the cockpit in which stood the waiting mechanic.

Then, suddenly, a coil of rope dropped from the upper ship, dangling backward in the wind until its end was just an arm's length beyond

Sam's reach. Joe, watching every move intently from his elevated seat, ruddered the "Apex" until her bow drifted over to the rope. Sam seized it and pulled. After a dozen hearty yanks, there appeared from the bottom of the refuelling ship two flexible hoses, of the type used at gasoline filling stations. One was very thick, the other not much larger than a common garden hose.

The mechanic pulled until the two nozzles at the end of the hose pipes came within reach. Then, grabbing one in each hand, he inserted the larger in the wide mouth of the gasoline filler pipe, the smaller in the water pipe. He squeezed the levers on the nozzles and knew from the vibration of the metal faucets under his hand that the precious fluids were flowing safely into his tanks.

The pilots of the two ships were expert. There was a slight swinging and swaying of the planes as they were caught in the varying gusts of wind but they held position perfectly and the slack of the hose pipes took up the variations without trouble.

At last Sam removed the small hose and held

it over his head. One of the Fokker's crew immediately drew it up into his ship. Sam turned this handle and that, directing the flow of fuel to the different tanks concealed within the wing until at last every gauge registered full. He tossed the hose from him and waved at the oil ship's pilot triumphantly. Joe nosed down and away. The Fokker immediately banked over and headed back toward Mineola, which was already lost in the distance to the rear.

"Well, that's that!" declared Andy in a voice of great satisfaction. "I feel as though we were really started at last. We have the biggest load of gas ever carried in an airplane. Enough for seventy hours of flying. We couldn't possibly have taken off with more than enough for forty or fifty hours. Now that we're actually in the air, it's a cinch to carry the load."

Sam popped out of the passageway, his face beaming with delight but screwed up into what was meant to be a woe-begone expression. He looked as though he had a toothache and both

Andy and Joe roared as they caught sight of him.

"Hey!" he said plaintively, "for the luvva Mike, let's put on the nosebag and chew something! All I've had since dinner last night was a cup of hot wash and a couple of sinkers for breakfast, and I'm so hungry I could eat the mattress off my bed. If I don't get something soon, I'll go looking for Scotty and then we'll be plumb out of luck without a mascot."

"Fair enough!" laughed Andy. "I've missed a meal or two myself. They were put before me but I was too excited to eat. Tell Dick to cook us a good meal and then we'll settle down and get comfortable. We'll stand our regular shifts and get used to the old routine once again. We've worked nearly all night and we need sleep. We'd better get caught up while we have a chance."

Dick pulled out the electric stove and started to work. There was a great rattling of pots, pans and dishes and an appetizing odor of broiling steak and percolating coffee.

"I've got to get out of this cabin," fussed

Sam. "I just can't stand smells like that when I'm hungry. Man, I'm as empty as a bass drum!"

So saying, he hung an open mouthed tool bag around his neck and clambered through the hatchway to the top of the wing. In another moment he had clipped his two safety straps to the guard rail and was walking along the smooth wind-swept surface as calmly as though he was promenading the broad deck of an ocean liner. Paying absolutely no attention to the whistling, clawing wind that tried to hurl him to the ground a thousand feet below, he was tenderly wiping the silent center engine with cotton waste. Although the motor had not been in use fifteen minutes since he had last inspected it in the hangar, he could not resist this opportunity to touch it up just once more before it began its regular eight hour shift.

From the convenient tool bag he produced a long-necked oil can with which he lubricated rocker arms, oil pump and, in fact, every bearing surface that he could reach. Then, with a screw driver, an end wrench and a pair of pliers, he tested this and that until, appar-

ently, he was unable to find one more thing to do. Then he wiped off the oil streaks again and returned to the cabin, sniffing hungrily.

"Pinch me, boys and girls!" he begged as he, Dick and Andy sat down at the drop table. "Here we have beefsteak, done to a nice, juicy turn, fried potatoes, coffee and bakery apple pie, all served on china dishes, on a linen tablecloth and in a room that would do credit to the latest Park Avenue apartment. Too bad that Joe and Sonny have to remain at their posts to operate the ship and the radio while we eat. But all I have to remark is that if this is an example of the well-known and widely advertised dangers and discomforts of flying, I'd love to do something really risky!"

"Don't start to crow yet," warned Andy, laughing. "There's no telling where this voyage is going to end and how many thousands of miles we'll have to fly before we find the airship or before we have to give up the hunt."

"Listen, Andy," burst out the mechanic suddenly, "there's just one thing that I'd have asked you before if I'd had time. It's this; what are we going to do with this dirigible if

we do see it? Treat it like a bird and throw salt on its tail?"

"Well," confessed the pilot, "that's a question that we'll have to puzzle out when we come to it. If she is floating over land, the best thing to do may be to take that machine gun we have in the rear locker and pepper its gas bags with bullets to let the gas leak out and allow it to settle to the ground. Of course we'd lose the reward for the recovery of the ship, but we'd rescue the three men and recover the gold."

"And just toss that hundred thousand dollar part of the reward into the briny deep, eh?" scoffed Sam. "Let's think out something better than that!"

"How about you and I putting on parachutes and dropping off the 'Apex' to the top of the 'Britain'?"

"Who, me?" demanded the other pushing back his plate.

"Yes."

"Sweet Susie, no! I'm so heavy I'd go clean through her top and come out the bottom still dropping like a ten ton shell!"

"All right," grinned Andy, "don't lose any

sleep over it yet. Dick, you'd better relieve Sonny at the radio and let him and Scotty have their lunch. I'll take over the controls so Joe can eat."

But just at that moment Sonny came into the cabin with a wireless message he had just received from the Weather Bureau. He passed it to Andy, who read it aloud.

"Storm Warning. Weather Bureau advises you to return to Mineola and begin flight again tomorrow. Disturbed conditions due to hurricane at sea developing into storm of severe intensity off coasts of Maine and New Brunswick. Low pressure area extends for a thousand miles in your direct path." It was signed by the expert in the Weather Bureau at Washington who had assisted Andy so many times during his other great flights.

"The professor is trying to tell us that we'll probably break our fool necks if we go ahead," said Andy slowly. "I'm going to leave it to you fellows to decide. Shall we go ahead or go back to Mineola and call it off?"

"If you dare to turn back," stated Sam, with great emphasis, "I'll jump out right now in

my 'chute and start walking after the dirigible. And you know how I hate to get my feet wet!"

The others laughed. The little mechanic had never been known to turn back, once he had started anything.

"Me too!" agreed Dick, hastily.

"What do you say, Sonny? Your vote counts just as much as mine, in a case like this."

"Well, we've ridden through some pretty hard storms in the other 'Apex' and you flirted with a tornado in the first big ship, so I don't see why we shouldn't go ahead," said the youngster, smiling confidently at his pal.

Andy Lane grinned happily. These were men after his own heart! But there was one more vote to be taken, from the most experienced flier of them all. He walked into the control room and read the warning message to Joe.

"Phooie!" scoffed the pilot, his steady blue eyes still watching the compass and the rolling, wooded hills which were slipping beneath the broad wing of the "Apex." "If the others are game, let's find out whether this old crate can stand a little rough weather or not. If she isn't airworthy, I'd rather find it out now

than discover that sad fact when we are half way across the Atlantic, wouldn't you?"

And so it was decided. The blunt bow of the great flying boat was held on its course, straight toward a storm which hardened fishermen off the Grand Banks were to refer to for years afterward as the "year of the big summer storm."

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORM STRIKES

THE storm struck the fast-flying "Apex" late that afternoon as she winged her way toward the scene of her next refuelling over St. Johns, Newfoundland. Ever since lunch the crew had been preparing for the blow. Everything movable had been lashed down or carefully packed in the lockers. While Joe Lamson remained at the controls, the others went about their duties packing away the huge pile of odds-and-ends which had been put aboard at the last minute during the final hurried preparations at Mineola.

As Joe conned the wheel and rudder pedals he rejoiced in the smooth, even motion of the plane through the clear air over Long Island, Buzzard's Bay, Cape Cod and the first great open stretches of the Atlantic Ocean. She was so evenly balanced that she could almost have flown herself. Except for an almost imper-

ceptible movement of the wheel and an occasional slight pressure on right or left rudder pedals, the work of piloting was scarcely more difficult than that of steering a heavy motor truck along a smooth country highway.

The fishing village of Provincetown, on the tip end of Cape Cod, had been lost astern and ahead the horizon was becoming dim and murky. A flotilla of destroyers, their needle-like hulls rolling wildly in the trough of the great rollers, was overhauled and passed. Although the fleet little vessels were steaming at 30 knots in search of the dirigible, the "Apex" passed over them at such a tremendous speed that the ships themselves seemed to be making no progress at all. Clusters of white-clad sailors on their tiny decks waved watch caps up at the roaring flying boat and Joe waggled her wings in response.

From time to time Sonny entered the control room and passed the pilot pencilled messages from the Weather Bureau and from ships at sea reporting the progress of the West Indian hurricane and of the new storm which was now threatening them. Each of these reports had

been noted by Andy, who drew in the paths of the storms on his charts.

Sonny seemed utterly unconcerned at the seriousness of the messages which passed through his hands. The kid might as well have been in his radio shack at home, Joe mused, as in the cabin of a flying boat plunging straight into the teeth of a terrific gale. The boy concentrated on his work, his only relaxation being an occasional romp with Scotty, who, being sulky because Andy was too busy to pay proper attention to him, would not leave the radio room.

Andy, as commander of the ship, seemed to be everywhere at once. Beginning with the refuelling cockpit at the bow, which was now protected from wind and weather by a heavy steel shutter, he worked his way through one cabin after another until he had completed a most thorough inspection of the entire ship, from bow to rudder.

Then, calling all the members of the crew together in the control room, he said:

“Now, fellows, we’d better get ourselves straightened out in our regular routine. We’re

in for a long cruise and we all know that it's easier when we're working on regular shifts. We left Mineola a few minutes before noon. From now on, except in emergencies, we'll put in four hour shifts. Four on and four off.

"Joe, you took the wheel when we left. Keep on the job, then, until four o'clock. We should have passed Cape Sable by that time and be flying along the coast of Nova Scotia. Then I'll relieve you until eight.

"Sam, you and I will be on the same shift. Dick will stand watch with Joe. Both of you will watch the radio while Sonny sleeps. He is the only one who will be irregular in his hours, but if he doesn't get enough sleep, we will pick him up by the scruff of his neck and throw him overboard!"

"You bet we will!" agreed Sam, earnestly. "On the race around the world, we forgot to keep track of his naps and the first thing we knew, he dropped asleep in the middle of a meal. Then we remembered for the first time that he hadn't gone to bed for two or three days."

Sonny looked a little sheepish as the other

fellows laughed at the recollection. But Sam gave him a clap on the back that nearly knocked his horn-rimmed spectacles completely off his nose. Scotty, thinking that such a slap was not a joke, nipped the mechanic upon the leg with all good will and refused to cease growling until Sonny had picked him up and whispered in his ear that everything was quite all right.

Andy, having taken a last glance at the charts and drawing a pencilled line to mark the progress they had made across the arm of the Atlantic that separated Cape Cod from Cape Sable, turned into his bunk with all his clothes on. But he was unable to sleep. The excitement of the first few hours of the trip, the menace of the oncoming storm and the prospect of chasing the missing dirigible half-way around the world made him roll and toss on his bunk. At last he felt a cold, wet little nose rubbing against his face. Scotty, having missed his master, was looking for him and now wished that he might have some of the so-long-delayed attention that he felt was due him. He loved flying in these great ships, did the

pup, but he, like his master, needed a day or two to get used to everything.

The pilot smiled softly and lifted the woolly dog into his arms. Then, with the warmth and the companionship of the little fellow against his body, both he and the mascot fell fast asleep.

At five minutes of four Sam's hand shook Andy out of his nap and, rubbing his eyes, the youngster staggered out into the control room. Gone was the slow, even movement of the "Apex." She was heeling violently now, first to this side, then to the other, under the mighty gusts of wind that tore at her from the mist-filled northern skies. They were skirting a grim rock-bound shore, Andy noticed. Out of the windows on the left side of the control room he could see rocky cliffs rising from the ocean, against which the mighty rollers sweeping in from the sea pounded themselves into creamy geysers of foam. To the right, nothing could be seen but a vast, desolate expanse of greenish gray water, flecked with white-caps, looking very ugly and inhospitable. Joe was sitting behind the wheel, calm as usual, correcting the

bumps easily, instinctively. They seemed to cause him no trouble at all.

"All right, Joe," said Andy, slipping down into the other seat and taking wheel and rudder. "If you'll draw the line on the chart to show where we are, now, I'll take her over."

Joe pulled the swinging chart table in front of him, studied the coast line for a moment, then with ruler and pencil continued the line Andy had started to a point almost half-way between Cape Sable and Halifax.

"She flies like a million dollars, kid. Almost swims over the bumps herself. We'll probably hit the heart of the storm about over St. Johns, the way things look now. Sonny took a message a few minutes ago saying that the weather was pretty dirty over the town of Halifax. If you need help on the wheel, call me. I'm going to turn in. There's no telling how much sleep any of us will get before morning."

Andy realized, as he became accustomed to the air, that they were only on the fringes of the storm. The wind was hitting them in great, even bumps, not difficult to fight or to fly

through. But the air felt heavy and sultry. There was an ominous feeling of suspense in the atmosphere, almost like that instant after a sharp flash of lightning, while one waits for the resulting crash of thunder.

Sam popped his head into the control room door.

"It's time for the left wing motor to take a rest, old scout," he called. "Better put the center engine to work, now. It's loafed long enough."

Andy manipulated the switches to cut one and start the other. Then, turning his head, he saw the fat little mechanic swarming up on the wing, bestowing his tender care upon the motor which had just ceased its labor. The great surges of the wing as the "Apex" rose and fell with the gusts of wind did not bother Sam at all. His fingers were just as sure and his work just as unhurried as it had been the last time he had been on the wing, shortly before lunch. His inspection completed, he returned to the cabin and came in to stand beside Andy for a moment, shivering with the cold.

“Man, that wind is blowing down on us from the North Pole,” he chattered. “When I signed up for this trip, I forgot all about the fact that we were going to fly through cold air! Me, I like the tropics better. Here’s where I turn on the electric heaters.”

He returned to the living cabin and in a few moments Andy saw the heaters in the corners of the control room begin to glow with a red, warm light. As the interior began to lose its chill he realized that what Sam had said was the truth; that they had really worked their way into cold, northern latitudes. Four or five hours ago they had perspired freely as they had worked upon the ship in her hangar. Now it was cold. The swiftly moving ship had certainly eaten up the miles!

It was not yet five o’clock. Far too early for sunset. Yet, the cabin was becoming dark with incredible rapidity. Glancing behind him, Andy could see that the boys had snapped on the lights in the other cabins. He could see one corner of the living room from his seat behind the wheel. Everything looked so cosy and homelike that he found it hard to realize

that they were in a speeding airplane, flying over Nova Scotia into the heart of a storm!

Suddenly, with a slow, ponderous movement, the wide left wing of the "Apex" lifted and lifted until the tremendous ship seemed to be standing straight on her right wing tip. For an instant she hung there while Andy desperately pushed at the wheel to nose her down before she sideslipped and fell out of control. For the space of a dozen heartbreaking seconds the controls seemed to have no effect upon her. The pilot cut in the silent engine, which immediately added its five hundred horsepower to the job of pushing her through the screaming blast of wind that threatened to end the flight in disaster then and there.

In the next moment, there was a breathtaking swoop as her flippers and ailerons took hold. She went into a steep dive, plunging down toward the water like a falling projectile as the mighty force of the three engines added their push to the momentum of the dropping ship. Hard over on the wheel, Andy pulled, to straighten her wings out of their frightful tilt, then, as they slowly resumed

their normal position, he eased back very gently, to lift her nose out of the dizzy dive. Not too fast, he reminded himself, or the weight of the fifteen-ton hull would strip her wing clean away from its fastenings. Little by little her nose came up, as her pilot watched the rapidly diminishing distance between her bow and the angry, leaping waters, which seemed to be reaching up to grasp at the fighting ship and her crew. At last, the cold perspiration dripping from his nose and chin, Andy levelled her out, the bottom of her mahogany hull not fifty feet above the white-caps.

Gone was the steady forward progress of the "Apex." She bucked and plunged like a chip of wood in a maelstrom. Large as she was, she seemed but a puny thing of fragile wood and linen in the mighty grasp of the elements.

CHAPTER IX

A NIGHT OF PERIL

TOSSED headlong out of his berth by the first wild careening of the storm-swept plane, Joe slid down the slanting floor of the cabin, through the door of the control room and dropped into the seat beside Andy just as he straightened the "Apex" out of her dizzy nose dive and pulled the wheel back to work her up to safer altitudes.

It was well that he had come, for those shrieking gusts of wind almost tore the wheel from Andy's strong hands. Joe's powerful muscles on wheel and rudder lessened the burden on the boy and together these two set themselves to the grim task of simply keeping her upright in the air and steady on her course.

Dick, too, had been tossed out of his bed. He scrambled to the living room and found Sam, his safety belt clipped to an eyelet in the wall, standing tense and ready, straining his

ears for the slightest unevenness in the steady beat of the three motors overhead. His open-mouthed tool bag was already in position and he was ready to leap up the ladder to the reeling wing at the slightest untoward sound.

Dick, holding himself erect by pushing on the wall with both hands, worked his way to the radio cabin and peeped in. Sonny was braced in his swivel chair in front of his apparatus. Scotty's head drooped from one side of his lap, his long, bushy, tan and white tail over the other. The boy seemed completely oblivious of all that was going on outside of the little area of coils, wires, bulbs and switches directly before his eyes. The hissing chatter of code in his ears kept him enthralled, forgetful of the madly careening "Apex," inattentive to the creaking and groaning of laboring struts and longerons and to the wailing shriek of the wind through the wires. Scotty cocked one brown eye at Dick, as if to ask if everything was all right. Then, seeing the amused grin on his face, the little dog closed the eye, content to be in the lap of his master's little friend.

Long gray tendrils of fleecy clouds reached

out and enveloped the flying boat. Wherever they touched the windows of the control cabin they turned into rivulets of water. Andy switched on the windshield wipers. More and more of these wisps of clouds drifted in the path of the hurtling ship until, at last, they all seemed welded into one immense cloud of wet gray fog.

Andy and Joe found themselves looking at solid gray walls of glass, which might as well have been covered with paint for all they were able to see. The softly glowing radium-painted dials of the instruments on the panel before them were their only guides. Compass, altimeter and the spirit level which told them whether the "Apex" was flying on an even keel were their only aids to navigation now and they steered the ship with their eyes constantly upon these dials and gauges.

The pitching and tossing of the tremendous amphibian grew more and more violent as they forced their way deeper and deeper into the maelstrom of air. Andy knew that although it seemed impossible that the storm could become much more violent, such indeed would be the

case, for they were still only upon the front edge of its thousand mile area. Often such storms increased many times in their energy as one approached their centers.

"You wouldn't believe," panted Joe during a momentary lull in the whipping blasts of the wind, "that a ship as big as this one could jump around in such fashion! Let's climb and see if we can get above the worst of it."

With the three motors turning up every possible revolution they fought their way upward, foot by foot. Great updraughts of wind would get beneath the wings and give her a mighty lift. In the next moment the pilots would feel her drop beneath a descending current until she would lose half the distance already won. Three thousand feet, then five and, after half an hour of struggle, ten thousand showed upon the altimeter. The air outside registered 35 degrees upon the thermometer on the instrument board.

Great sheets of rain swept against the windows, the force of it sounding through the cabin like the steady roar of a waterfall. The air seemed a little less violent at this altitude, but

the pilots knew that its force was tremendous, nevertheless.

Andy rang an electric call button and Sonny answered its hail.

"Send a radio to St. Johns and ask them how the weather looks up there," Andy requested. "Then get your direction-finding compass to work and see what this storm is doing to us. We may have drifted fifty miles off our course since we ran into it."

In five minutes the boy returned with his answer. "St. Johns reports that the wind is blowing a whole gale. It's raining and hailing and they say there isn't the slightest chance in the world of refuelling while the storm lasts. They advise us to turn about and try to beat the storm to Old Orchard, Maine, land there and wait until it blows over before continuing our flight. Now as to our position. We are about thirty miles east of Halifax right at this moment."

"Well, then, the storm is blowing us out to sea," said Andy, studying the chart before him as he automatically pulled and pushed on wheel and rudder. "Our course would have taken us

right across the town of Halifax. If we should head directly east, now, the wind would be almost on our tail."

"How about gas?" asked Sam, who was listening to the talk from the doorway where he had propped himself against the wild motion of the ship.

"We had seventy hours when we left Min-eola, didn't we?" demanded Andy.

"Yes. Seventy hours for two motors. We've been using three for the last two hours."

"And we've been about six hours in the air," added the young commander, "so we don't absolutely need to fill up tonight. We'll have more than enough to zigzag all the way across the Atlantic if we can cut out one of the engines."

"Right," answered Sam, briefly.

"The navy doesn't seem to think the 'Britain' is up in these parts, anyway," offered Sonny. "I've listened to a lot of messages between the warships and between Arlington radio station and other ships at sea. They all think that the airship is well out in mid-ocean somewhere now, still tagging along

in the hurricane, which has almost blown itself out."

"That settles it," decided Andy. "Due east, then, until we run out of this storm. Sonny, tell the St. Johns office of the Superior Oil Company that we won't need their gas. Next refuelling will be over England or Ireland. Better tell Mr. Avery and Mr. Seymore, too."

Andy and Joe waited for a lull in the roaring storm and then tilted the "Apex" over on her new course, leaving the coast of Nova Scotia behind. The gray windows were now pitch black, for night had closed in with the clouds. Except for the dim light over their chart and the soft radiance from the instrument board, their control room was as dark as the inside of a pocket. The flying boat seemed to ride more easily on the easterly tack, but it was still a job for both pilots. The great plunges of the heavy ship called for strength at the wheels and the rudder pedals. Andy and Joe both realized that if she ever fell off into a tailspin during one of these frightful plunges, they could never bring her out of it in time to avoid a fatal crash.

"Let's cut out one of the engines, Joe," suggested Andy. "Now that we are not bucking the storm head-on, we may be able to ride it with only two."

Joe nodded. Andy gradually pushed one of the throttles down, slowing the motor little by little before daring to cut the switch. Instantly Sam appeared in the doorway, peering through the darkness at the throttles.

"Golly!" he exclaimed in a relieved voice. "I didn't know whether you were cutting her down or whether the engine was passing out on us!"

He returned to the living room just as Andy cut the switch. Three minutes later, there was a flicker of light in the rear-view mirror over the window. Andy and Joe looked back and saw the white beam of a pocket searchlight playing over one engine after another. The raindrops sweeping through the slice of whiteness glistened like millions of diamonds and the engines, as they were caught in the moving light, were etched in steely blue silhouettes against the blackness of the night.

In spite of the sickening rolling and tossing

of the "Apex," Sam had gone up there on the wing to inspect and adjust his motors! Andy wondered how he could keep his feet on the seesawing surface, even with the help of his safety belt and straps. But the light remained, flickering over the now silent engine, while white hands, equipped with brilliantly glistening white tools, appeared and disappeared within the beam of the searchlight as the daring mechanic touched up the engine. At last, much to the relief of the two pilots, the beam made its way toward the hatch and disappeared.

The tantalizing odor of broiling bacon and boiling coffee seeped into the darkened control room. Yes, life within the "Apex" was going on in its regular routine, no matter whether the giant craft was to live through the night or not! Dick was getting dinner. Sam had adjusted his engines and Sonny was undoubtedly sitting with his ears glued to the earphones. The other member of the crew, Scotty, was probably asleep, dreaming of unsteady houses and jumping beds.

CHAPTER X

SONNY IS PUZZLED

ANDY never quite remembered how he was able to get through the rest of that terrible night. For endless hours he and Joe sat silent in their seats holding the "Apex" upon her mad, plunging course by the sheer force of their tired arms and legs. The instruments became blurred under the concentrated attention of his eyes. It became almost impossible for him to read the numbers on the veering compass and upon the jumping altimeter. A dozen times an hour he thought that the clock must have stopped, for the hour and minute hands crept around the radium-painted dial so slowly that he could not believe they were moving at all.

At four o'clock in the morning he suddenly realized that the flying boat was riding the storm more steadily. It needed less violent movements of wheel and rudder to hold her

on her course. The bubbles in the spirit levels swayed back and forth less wildly. The ship was, he realized, approaching the outer fringe of the storm.

“All right, Joe,” he said at last, “it’s my trick at the wheel. You’ve only had an hour and a half of your sleep. Beat it, now, for bed. I can hold her alone.”

Lamson’s keen eyes surveyed the boy, noting the drawn, haggard, fatigue lines which ran from his finely chiselled nose to the corners of his wide, generous mouth. He dropped the wheel and took his feet from the rudder pedals and sat there, for a moment, watching the action of the ship with one man at the controls. At last, satisfied that Andy could stand out the rest of the watch, he reluctantly rose and went into the living room. Sam, his safety belt still firmly buckled around his waist, sat in one of the wicker chairs, his feet propped up on the drop table. He was wedged into a corner so that he would not topple to the floor under the unsteady motion of the plane and was reading a magazine with absorbed interest. He grinned cheerfully at the relief pilot.

In the radio cabin, Sonny, looking very small and tired, was sitting before the dials, Scotty still asleep in his lap.

"How are you making out?" asked Joe, kindly, giving the boy's thin shoulders a gentle pat.

"Fine!" replied Sonny, cheerfully. "I've been listening to band concerts from one of the New York roof gardens, all the news about the missing 'Britain' and, for the past two hours, trying to puzzle out some messages that seem a bit mysterious."

"Mysterious?" repeated Joe, curiously.

"Yes. Way down on the short waves, at 9.5 meters, someone is sending some faint messages in a code that I can't understand. It's pure gibberish and makes no sense at all. I don't suppose it's important and if it were coming from the shore, I wouldn't have paid any attention to it. I'd have thought that it was some amateurs learning how to send. But, having nothing better to do, I've been putting my direction finder to work and it seems to come from the general direction of the north of Scotland. And yet the signals aren't strong

enough to have come that far. It's mighty funny."

"I'm glad you've had something to keep you interested," replied Joe, carelessly. To him, anything that came out of the air in dots and dashes was meaningless. "Well, you'd better get Dick to come relieve you before long and turn in."

"All right," agreed the boy, "I'll hit the hay before long. But I want to study these messages a while longer, first."

"I'm so tired I wouldn't stay to listen to a ringside description of the Statue of Liberty doing a clog dance," muttered Joe as he dropped into his berth without even stopping to take off his shoes. In less than three minutes he was asleep.

Nothing that Andy had ever seen looked half so welcome or so beautiful as his first glimpse of the sunrise. When the black clouds that enveloped the "Apex" turned into a leaden gray and then, little by little, changed into rose, silver and then white, he forgot his weary muscles and his aching eyes. There had been times during that age-long night, he admitted

to himself, when he had doubted whether any of the crew would live to see sunrise.

The clouds began to break away. He could see spots of blue sky between them. At last he caught a fleeting glimpse of the sea beneath, a patch of sapphire blue waters, ridged with rollers and looking, from that height, like an immense blue washboard. Then the hole in the sea of clouds beneath slipped under his wing and he was again flying over a vast billowy ocean of white cotton puffs, tinted on the top with every color of the rainbow. It was a gorgeous sight and one that had never failed to amaze him with its sheer beauty, as many times as he had watched similar scenes of gorgeousness from the air.

Through the rear view mirror he caught sight of the plump Sam, again on the wing. In response to the mechanic's signal, he cut in the center engine and turned off the right wing motor so that it could receive its early morning going-over.

Dick came into the control room looking fresh and cheerful after his four-hour sleep.

"Well, skipper, Joe is ear deep in breakfast.

Sonny has an appetite that will eat us out of house and home if he doesn't get filled up pretty soon. Sam's waiting, with a pained expression on his fat face, to eat with you. Joe will be out in a minute to take over the controls. So what will you have to eat?"

"What have you?"

"Flapjacks, broiled bacon, buttered toast."

"Oh boy!" cheered Andy. "Put a couple of dozen of everything on the fire and tell Joe to hurry!"

Five minutes later he and Sam were eating everything in sight. The warm sun was shining in through the portholes and the cozy living and dining room looked very serene and peaceful. The "Apex" forged ahead so steadily that it was not necessary to use the racks on the table to keep the dishes and glasses from slipping off. Not a drop of water spilled from the tumblers. It was as though the ship's wheels were resting on solid ground and Andy could hardly realize that they had just run out of a storm that had threatened to plunge them to their death in that friendly-looking ocean below.

As soon as he had finished the last morsel of his breakfast the young commander gathered together his sextant, sun compass and the other aids to navigation and went out into the balmy air of the open cockpit to take an observation. Then having "shot the sun," he pored over the large-scale charts in his office-like cabin. At last he was able to fix the position of the "Apex." He was amazed at the speed with which they had travelled through the storm. With only two engines turning over, but with the wind on their tail, they had averaged almost 150 miles an hour.

"Man, we've been travelling!" he murmured to himself as he left his cabin and walked into the radio room. Sonny was still at his desk, although Scotty was following Sam and Dick around the living room, begging for his breakfast.

"How much sleep did you get last night, ivory head?" he asked as the youngster looked up with a smile.

"None."

"What?" Andy was amazed.

"None. Dick and Sam both wanted to re-

lieve me but I've run across something that's got me guessing."

"Well, you stop guessing and turn in! I haven't slept, myself, since yesterday afternoon and I'm itching for the hay."

"Listen, Andy," the youngster said earnestly, "you *must* listen to what I say! Eight or ten times last night and early this morning I've listened in to some code messages on 9.5 meters. I can't read them but there's something about them that has made me suspicious. I've just put a call through to one of my amateur friends in the north of Scotland and to another one in Norway and——"

"Sonny, you're going to bed right now! I'm too tired to listen to the messages or to hear about them!" Andy leaned over and picked up the slender form of the little fellow in his muscular arms and carried him over to his bed. Then, tossing a camel's hair blanket over him, he shook his fist sternly and said, "If you get up before you're called, I'll give you an umbrella and toss you over on the deck of the very first ship we meet."

With a final warning scowl Andy left the

room and, with a huge sigh of relief, wrote the new course to be followed on a slip of paper, sent it out to Joe and tumbled in to his berth.

Sonny, who had obediently shut his eyes, opened them and listened intently for a moment. Then, swinging his feet out of bed, he rose and went back to his set.

CHAPTER XI

THE PIRATE CHIEF IS WORRIED

THE most important broadcasting stations in the United States remained on the air all during the exciting night of August 13 and thousands, perhaps millions, of people went without their sleep to listen to the almost continuous bulletins which were read every few minutes by the announcers.

Scores of ships, both naval and commercial, were regularly reporting the progress of their search after the "Britain," which, so far as anyone knew, was still drifting in the uncharted lanes of the air. There were frequent reports that she had been sighted by this or that ship or over one or another town or city. Each report increased the public's excitement and served to prolong the suspense, for as fast as one report was proved to be false, there was another to take its place.

While the interest of the public in the fate

of the "Britain" was great, most of the sleepless listeners who sat in front of their loudspeakers were far more anxious and worried about their national hero, Andy Lane, and his daring crew. Late in the afternoon it had become known that the "Apex" had plunged headlong into a tremendous storm off the coast of Nova Scotia. The Weather Bureau dispatch that the gale was the worst ever known in those stormy regions during the summer added to the seriousness of the outlook.

The keeper of the great lighthouse at Cape Sable had reported that he had seen the huge monoplane winging her way up the coast. Halifax and St. Johns reported that at the hour when the "Apex" was due to fly over these cities the gale was raging with such an intensity that it seemed almost impossible that any airplane could stay aloft.

Now and then, to the infinite relief of the world, brief messages were received from Sonny's radio, proving that the "Apex" was still in the air. But so brief and unworried were these reports from the flying boat itself that the broadcasting stations and the news-

paper editors were forced to depend upon other sources for their information about the conditions under which the famous aviators were flying.

Three S. O. S. messages from ships in the storm-swept area stopped all broadcasting for short intervals while the radio audience stood by their muted instruments and prayed that it had not been the harried "Apex" which had made the dreaded appeal for help. And when, after service had been restored, there came laconic messages direct from the great flying boat herself, the listeners wondered how she could stay in the air during a storm that was proving fatal to staunch ocean-going steamships.

Mr. Avery and David's father remained at the factory all night as the former had done during Andy's three previous flights. A receiving set of tremendous strength was tuned to the wave length assigned to the "Apex" and an expert operator sat before it, pencil in hand. A temporary transmitter had also been set up so that instructions and advice might be relayed to the crew of the flying boat.

When word came through that Andy had given up his plans for refuelling at St. Johns, the two men looked at each other with stark fear in their eyes. Both remembered some of the weather conditions that the boy had been forced to meet while refuelling during his other record-breaking hops. Both knew that the pilot would leave his extra gasoline behind and head out into the open Atlantic only in the most extreme emergency.

Mr. Collins thought of little Sonny, who seemed scarcely more than a child, sitting in the swaying, pitching cabin, faithful to his duty when every minute might be his last. The father's eyes grew moist but they shone with pride in his boy.

As the night dragged on and on, the men at the Apex factory traced on their map the struggling progress of their flying boat as she scudded before the wind. Time and time again they telephoned to the Weather Bureau for the latest reports as to the southward progress of the storm. And when, at dawn, a brief message hissed through the ether telling the waiting world that the "Apex" had, at last, out-

flown the gale and was now flying through serene skies, they felt as though they had aged twelve years in an equal number of hours.

Nearly 2,000 miles offshore the steam yacht "Wanderer" was, throughout the black watches of that anxious night, plunging at full speed ahead through rollers that had already swept her deck clean of everything that had not been lashed down.

She was not as ship-shape in appearance as she had been on the evening of the 10th, when her passengers had listened to the broadcasted account of the loss of the airship "Britain." She bore every external evidence of having been frightfully battered by the West Indian hurricane which had swept the seas through which she was steaming. A cautious captain would have reduced the speed of the yacht to enable her to ride over the long green seas. But, instead, her sharp bow dived through each wave, cascading solid water the entire length of her steel decks as she plowed along at full speed.

Five out of her six lifeboats had been washed overboard. Great dents could be seen in her

steel deckhouse as though a giant's fist had crashed against it in a dozen mighty blows. Her ventilator cowls stood at rakish angles; one of them a crumpled mass of sheet steel on the hurricane deck. Numberless heavy glass portholes had been smashed by the terrific force of the seas and had been crudely boarded up until the crew could take the time to replace them.

Within the beautiful smoking saloon sat Hanson, studying a chart of the North Atlantic Ocean as he listened to the radio announcer from New York telling of Andy Lane's struggle with the elements off Halifax. Beside him was a pad and a pencil upon which were noted tables of distances, latitudes and longitudes and many columns of scribbled figures.

The wireless operator staggered across the careening floor and brought a message in code. With the aid of a book that looked like a dictionary, the leader of the pirates translated the message.

"Still unable to control dirigible. Drifting northeast at about twelve miles an hour.

Weather clear now. Hurry." It was signed with the single initial "B."

Hanson's face grew red with sudden anger.

"What's the matter with them?" he stormed. "Don't any of them know the first thing about flying? Next thing you know some warship will find them or Andy Lane, with his fool's luck, will stumble on them and our goose will be cooked!"

The operator stood silent. He had no wish to bring Hanson's wrath down upon his head.

"Are Jennings and Mueller still seasick?" snapped the leader.

"Yes sir. They can't raise their heads off the pillows."

The big man sat there, nursing his anger. He glanced toward the portholes and saw the first tints of dawn dispelling the darkness outside. Suddenly the loudspeaker, which had been tuned in on WEAFF all night, broke the silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience," came the smooth voice of the announcer, "we are very glad to come on the air again at this time to report another message relayed

to us from Andy Lane's amphibian, the 'Apex.' Her radio operator reports that she has passed completely out of the storm which so nearly caused disaster and is now flying in calm weather. Since the gale hit her last evening she has made remarkable speed through the air and is now nearly fifteen hundred miles east of Halifax, or more than half-way to England. There is, we regret to say, no further news of the missing airship 'Britain.' Additional bulletins will be announced as they are received."

Hanson listened carefully to the very end. Then, with the angry red flush still on his cheeks, but with a quite apparent effort to control his temper, he seized his code book, a scrap of paper and a pencil. Riffing through the pages as he searched for the code words he wished to use, he jotted down, at last, a sentence of seven words which was quite meaningless to the wireless man.

"Here, Sparks," he snapped, "snap out of it now and get that message to Brewster! Be sure he gets it, see?"

Sparks did see and started for the door at a run.

“Hey, wait a minute!” roared Hanson and the operator stopped in mid-flight. “Tell the captain to put five more miles an hour into this tea kettle if he has to screw down the safety valve! Tell him not to come down here and argue with me, either. He may be the captain, but tell him not to show his ugly mug down here until it’s to tell me the ‘Britain’ has been sighted. Beat it!”

CHAPTER XII

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

WHEN Andy Lane next opened his eyes it was noon, according to the clock fastened against his cabin wall. With a start of astonishment he rolled out of bed and dashed into the control room where Joe was sitting calmly at the wheel, piloting the "Apex" at two thousand feet over an endless expanse of glistening, whitecapped seas.

"What's the idea in not waking me, Joe?" he asked angrily. "You know I didn't want to sleep through half the day! You've only had a few hours of sleep yourself!"

Joe grinned back at him unabashed, then resumed his watch over compass, horizon, sea and sky.

"We all took a vote," he said calmly, "and decided that you needed a couple of hours more beauty sleep. I did get three hours more sleep

than you realized. Sam came in and steered the old truck while I took a cat nap."

"What's the idea of steering due north-east?" demanded the boy as his eyes fell on the compass. "The course last set was direct for Land's End, England. The way you're heading now doesn't take us anywhere near there. Are we going to the North Pole by way of Spitzbergen?"

"Go and ask Sonny," said Joe mysteriously. "He was captain while you slept. Then get your lunch and I'll be tickled silly to present you with the wheel for the rest of the afternoon!"

Much puzzled, Andy walked through the living room where Dick was busy with lunch and into Sonny's little office. The boy was still at his radio set, looking thin, white and almost fagged out.

"For the love of Mike, kid," exclaimed Andy, forgetting his questions, "how much sleep have you had?"

"Gee, Andy!" replied the boy, "I'm glad you're awake. I started to call you three hours ago but you were so dead asleep, I didn't have

the heart. So we all decided to let you sleep it out. But Andy!" his voice quavered with excitement, "we're heading straight for the 'Britain!'" "

Andy could hardly believe his ears. He stared at the boy, wide-eyed.

"Are you crazy from lack of sleep?" he demanded.

"No. Sit down and let me tell you about it. I tried to give you a hint of what I suspected last night but you were too tired to listen."

"Well, I'm listening now. Shoot!"

"All right, then. All during the early part of last night and three or four times before dawn, I picked up messages on my short wave tuner that got my goat. They were in strange code so I couldn't read them. One station was exchanging messages with another. There was something funny about the whole business and I didn't have anything to do during the storm but sit there and think, so I got curious and tried to trace them down with my direction finder. What I discovered made me still more suspicious and I tried to tell you last night about asking two of my amateur friends in

Europe to listen in and try to locate them.

“Now here’s what I believe, Andy. The three people on the ‘Britain’ are working their radio and talking to someone on a ship.”

“Now I know you’re crazy, Sonny!” interrupted Andy. “If they could use the radio at all, why wouldn’t they just broadcast to the whole world that they were alive and safe and try to tell people where they are? What would be the idea of tuning her set down to a short wave and having secret conversations with someone unless—” Andy suddenly broke off, his eyes opening wide.

“Unless they were crooks!” Sonny finished it triumphantly. “Right you are, old scout! That’s just what we’ve all doped out. They are crooks and trying to get away with the five millions!”

“Well,” said Andy, at last, “we’d better not get too excited about it. The whole world would laugh at us if we went off half-cocked. Where do you think the ‘Britain’ is?”

“If I’ve doped the thing out right, she’s somewhere off the coast of Norway, just below the Arctic Circle. According to my direction

finder, she's northeast of us. That checks with the bearing my amateur friends took, too. And, in addition, the tail end of that West Indian hurricane passed off into nothing somewhere off the North Cape.

"According to my dope, the ship that she's talking with is somewhere to the north of us now. I didn't think it was worth while chasing after her. So, after talking it over with the boys, I sent a message for the refuelling ship from the London office of the Superior Oil Company to meet us, if possible, about a hundred miles northwest of the Hebrides Islands on the northern tip of Scotland. That won't take us far off our course. The manager says that the ship has already left for Scotland and if we'll keep in touch with him by radio, he'll have the oil plane jump off in plenty of time to meet us."

"Sonny, you're a wonder!" Andy gave the youngster a slap on the back. "Now just one thing more. How much sleep have you had since I put you to bed at daybreak?"

Sonny's eyes fell. He did not answer.

"Dick!" Andy's voice resounded through

the cabins. Dick's head popped into the doorway. "You sit down here and take over the radio. Let 'Hungry Sam' get lunch. If Sonny Collins doesn't go straight to sleep after he's had his lunch, we're going to land beside the first steamer we see and put him aboard."

There was no more protest from Sonny. He was too sleepy to even take a single bite of lunch. He dropped on his berth and was asleep before his head touched the pillow.

Scotty, whose sleep had been badly broken during the storm-ridden night, jumped up beside him, twisted and turned and finally settled down in a woolly tan and white ball, snuggling close to the boy for companionship.

Luncheon over, watches were again set in their regular routine. The members of the crew were adjusting themselves to the cramped quarters and had become perfectly at home on the gently swaying floors of the cabins. Andy relieved Joe at the controls. Sam, after clearing up the lunch dishes and making a stem to stern inspection of the entire ship, turned in for the first real sleep he had enjoyed since leaving Mineola.

The afternoon passed almost monotonously as the "Apex" roared her way toward a horizon which never seemed to grow nearer. They passed diagonally across the transatlantic shipping lanes and flew over nearly a dozen steamers of all sizes, from a tiny Norwegian tramp which looked scarcely large enough to paddle in safety across New York harbor, to the majestic American flagship, "Leviathan," with her three red, white and blue funnels. Warships were sighted, too. American and British destroyers and light cruisers were wallowing along at three-quarters speed on their search for the "Britain." Two French cruisers, plowing toward the north, were likewise engaged in the hunt. Each of these vessels saluted the fast-flying plane, radioed a message of good luck and then reported her to their various governments.

Dick had become infected with Sonny's excitement over the mysterious code messages and wondered why none of the searching warships had become suspicious of them until he realized that few of the radio operators on these government ships were likely to tune their sets

to these very low wave lengths which were, ordinarily, used only by amateur and experimental stations.

He was in constant touch with the London office of the Superior Oil and Gas Company, reporting the position of the "Apex" as often as Andy gave him the information. The refuelling plane was equipped with a low power radio, so when she at last took the air and headed out for the spot over the ocean at which the two planes were to meet, it was a simple task to make and maintain contact with her.

Sonny, Sam and Joe all waked from their sleep and resumed their duties, cheerful and excited in the knowledge that they had really spanned the Atlantic and were flying near enough to the coast of Scotland to be able to dash in for a landing if it seemed advisable.

"If we had flown straight ahead instead of curving northward, we would have been over Land's End, England, by this time," announced Andy, as he turned the controls over to Joe. "But with those mysterious messages getting louder and louder, we can't afford to waste any time."

"I'll tell the knock-kneed world!" agreed Sam. "I can feel my share of a million dollars rattling around in my pockets right now. I'm making up my mind how I'm going to spend it and, if my addition is correct, I only have two dollars and thirty-four cents left out of my share. I'm sure extravagant with a quarter of a million. Always have been!"

"Well, you'd better not spend any more 'till we at least see the 'Britain'," laughed Andy. "Don't forget that by the time we reach her she may have so many warships and airplanes hovering around her that we won't even be able to see her at all."

"You said it," murmured Joe. "If it were not for this refuelling racket that gives us double or triple the cruising range of any other airplane afloat, it would have been a waste of money to start."

"And don't forget to say that if it weren't for our little ivory head of a radio man, we would still be zigzagging back and forth across the Atlantic, trying to find a needle in a haystack and worrying like the dickens about our supply of gas and oil!"

CHAPTER XIII

A LEAP THROUGH THE AIR

Just as the sun was setting in a tremendous ball of crimson flame, Dick, who was sitting out in the open cockpit watching the magnificent colors of sea and sky, yelled in excitement:

“Hey, gang, there’s the tank plane!”

At the same instant, Sonny entered the control room with a message from the refuelling ship stating that they had sighted the “Apex.”

Andy, at the controls, throttled his engines, keeping the great ship straight ahead on her course toward the northern coast of Norway. In a wide, sweeping circle, the huge biplane, growing bigger and bigger with each passing minute, came up rapidly from the rear, climbing as she forged ahead to reach her position just over the wide wing of the “Apex.”

“That baby knows his job,” commented Andy to himself. “I’ll bet the pilot of that

ship has refuelled us before somewhere on one of our big flights.”

Little by little the great land plane drew ahead until at last the rope dropped into Sam’s waiting arms. For nearly fifteen minutes the two planes droned along over the Atlantic, swaying gently in the wind, their pilots ever alert to prevent too great a separation between them and even more careful to avoid even the slightest collision between the wheels of the upper ship and the top wing of the “Apex.”

At last all the tanks had been filled. The crew of the refuelling ship wound up the hose pipes and lowered a well-filled market basket which was joyously received by Sam, who rolled his eyes and licked his lips in anticipation of what might be found beneath its oilcloth covering.

With a friendly salute, the pilot of the oil ship veered away and headed back for land, two hundred miles to the southeast. Joe brought the basket back through the control room into the living room and tore off the covering with eager hands.

“Newspapers!” he shouted. “Those can

wait. Nice, fresh meat, oodles and oodles of it! Oh, boy, what a dinner we'll have! Bread! Five pounds of butter! Milk! Well, look at this, a three pound box of candy! Yum, yum! Here are some bottles of real English jam, too! Get out of here, Sonny!"

Sonny, as excited as a boy at a Christmas party, was also rummaging into the basket which contained an unbelievable assortment of edible gifts for the crew. He and Sam fought over each new find until at last Joe, laughing, had to separate them and empty the remaining parcels on the floor. Then, allowing the two to squabble as much as they liked during the unwrapping, he picked up the latest issue of the *London Times*, the *Daily Mail*, and three or four very English-looking magazines, switched on the cabin lights and began to read.

The unparalleled feat of the "Apex" which was now so close to their shores had aroused the British people to a pitch of excitement that almost overshadowed the loss of the dirigible. Hopes were expressed that whether the famous and daring crew of the amphibian found the "Britain" or not, they would make the British

Isles a visit, for, to date, Andy and his pals had never included the northern part of Europe in any of their great flights. Each of the newspapers doubted that the dirigible was still in the air and considered it impossible that in the event she still was afloat, the "Apex" would be able to find her. Nevertheless, the sheer nerve and daring of the attempt aroused their ungrudging admiration, which they expressed unstintingly.

After a wonderful dinner of fresh meat and vegetables, topped off with some English plum pudding and candy, the crew fell once again into the accustomed night routine. Sonny could not be induced, now, to leave his radio instruments for a single moment. The occasional signals which had so mystified him were growing louder and louder. Constantly checking them with his radio loop, he found that the "Apex" was speeding straight toward one of the stations which was sending the strange messages. Now and then he advised Andy to turn a trifle more to the north as he watched and listened to his radio compass and ear-phones.

Watch followed watch until, at four in the morning, Andy glanced through the windows of the control room to see, far, far ahead in the steely gray light of the dawn, a tiny aluminum colored speck which blended so well into the sky that, when he looked at it steadily for a few seconds, it seemed to disappear. His shout brought all hands into the room. Sam, Sonny and Dick ducked through the passageway and reappeared in the open cockpit, where their vision was not obscured by the double thickness of glass.

“Sweet Sister Susie!” shouted Sam, seizing Sonny in a bear hug and trying to waltz with him in the tiny space. “It’s the Zeppelin or I’m a ground hog! Whoopie, we’ve made \$10,000 already, or will have made it as soon as you beat it back to your hen coop and send out word of its exact position.”

Andy and Joe looked at each other silently. It seemed almost too good to be true, blundering straight into the dirigible which was being searched for by hundreds and hundreds of ships and airplanes. And here they were, within a few miles of the Arctic Circle, over a

lonely ocean, not a surface ship in sight, looking straight at the missing "Britain."

Joe's face lighted up in a wide grin.

"Andy Lane," he said, "if you aren't the luckiest guy that ever set foot in an airplane! Every darned thing you've ever done has been shot with luck! I'm going to stick to you until I'm so old they have to push me to your ship in a wheel chair!"

Andy's smiling blue eyes turned to the dirigible again. Motors dead, she was drifting at about three thousand feet. Drifting helpless, at the will of the wind. She was badly out of trim, her bow hanging perceptibly lower than her stern. But she was in the air, at least, after her wild ride across the Atlantic.

The pilot turned the controls over to Joe and dashed into his office to study the charts. At last he jotted down the approximate position of the "Apex" and handed a slip of paper to Sonny, who had returned from the cockpit and was awaiting orders.

"Send this out, kid, as our approximate latitude and longitude. As soon as the sun rises we'll take an observation and send out our ex-

act position. Don't crow—just say that we've spotted the 'Britain' and that she's still in the air."

"After I send it out, Andy," asked the lad, fairly quivering with excitement, "shall I try to get those fellows on the airship with my radio?"

"No use. We'll see them—face to face—before long, if we have any luck!"

Andy hurried through the passageway leading into the cockpit. He wished to study the situation, to determine whether the plan he had made for rescuing the mammoth airship would be possible or not. Sam and Dick were still there, staring at the "Britain" with wide eyes. Scotty was there, too, his fore feet propped up against the forward cowling, his big brown eyes apparently observing every detail of this strange-looking thing in the air. He suddenly began to growl, deep down in his throat, and the hair on his neck stood straight up in a thick ruffle.

"Pipe down, Scotty!" Andy patted the excited pup. "What's the matter, don't you like that big sausage over there?" Scotty sub-

sided, but continued to rumble and sputter. It was clear that he did not like the appearance of the airship.

Closer and closer the "Apex" drew to the magnificent liner of the air. Andy was amazed by her size and her beauty. As large as was the "Apex", the "Britain" dwarfed it into insignificance. Joe steered toward her stern and when the vast flippers and rudders drew close, he banked over and, with engines throttled, cruised along the entire thousand-foot envelope. What a ship she was! Her five engine cars which hung suspended beneath the hull were staggered to prevent the wind-stream from one propeller blowing back upon the next. At her bow, where the envelope curved up toward the nose, the cabin windows began and extended back for full two hundred feet along the bottom of the silvery envelope.

"Look, Andy!" said Dick, pointing excitedly. "There, in the fifth window from the bow—three heads!"

Sure enough, as Andy strained his eyes at the rapidly passing windows he could see the faces of three men silhouetted against the dark-

ness of the interior. What a ride they must have had! Well, he had determined upon his course.

"Come on, fellows," he said to Sam and Dick, "let's go into the control room and have a little meeting." They met Sonny coming out. He turned and preceded them to the pilots' room.

"Got the message through to an English station," the boy said. "The operator there was so excited that his fingers stuttered on the sending key!"

They stood about the little room while Joe continued to circle around and around the "Britain."

"I'm going aboard her," said Andy, briefly, "and I'll need a mechanic. Want to go with me, Sam?"

"Sure," answered Sam, promptly. "How will we get aboard, take a step ladder?"

"Don't be silly. We'll put on our parachute packs, open the door and stand ready. Joe will come up astern into the wind, throttled down as low as the 'Apex' will fly. Then, when we're right on top of her, Joe will try to stall

the 'Apex' and then, when he has killed his speed as much as he can, we'll jump. Then he'll sideslip and, when he has cleared the balloon, he can nose down and regain his flying speed."

"What if you don't land right on top of her?" demanded Joe, worried.

"There's a flat place, ten or fifteen feet wide, on top of her," answered Andy. "You'll try to kill your speed when we're right over that. If we miss it and slip off, we'll pull the release rings on our 'chutes as soon as we're in the air. That will let us down into the water. It will be a cinch for you to land and pick us up so that we can try again."

"What do we do when we get on top of that silly bag?" Sam asked, very doubtfully. "Stay there, enjoying the breeze?"

"No, there'll be some kind of a ladder that will let us down into the cabins. You'll start the engines, or one or two of them, and we'll see what we can do about flying her to land."

"I've got a good mind to tie you up, Andy Lane," stated the mechanic, positively, "take command of the 'Apex,' and make Joe fly us

home! But, if you are determined to commit suicide, or some other silly idea, I'll toddle along with you. But I warn you that when I land, plunk, on top of that bag, she'll break in two in the middle and float away in two pieces. You'll probably be on one piece and I'll be on the other. It will be just my luck to be riding on the part that hasn't any food on it! Let's go!"

"Andy!" came Sonny's voice, very anxious, "aren't you going to let me go, too?"

"Not this time, kid," smiled the older boy, patting him on the back. "Sorry, but it's impossible. You stay with Joe and Dick and help fly the 'Apex.' " He turned to the pilot. "Joe, if we make it all right, stick around for a couple of hours and see if we're able to get her started and headed back toward land. If we do, you beat it for land yourself. Sooner or later we'll meet in London and fly the 'Apex' home again."

Andy dashed back into his room, filled his pockets with handkerchiefs, tooth brush and his other personal toilet articles, returned to the pilot's room and buckled himself into his para-

chute harness. Scotty seemed to know that something very unusual was about to happen, for he lifted a clumsy forepaw and clawed at his master's leg.

"Sorry, old boy, but I just can't take you this time," said Andy, stroking his long silky fur. "Besides, you wouldn't care about swimming in that cold water until Joe came down after us, would you?" The flying collie whined and shook his tail so hard that he wriggled all over. There was no doubt that he did want to go and was trying to tell Andy so in his best dog language. Andy gave him a final pat and turned to the window again.

"How about it?" asked Joe, briefly, as he swung easily along toward the stern of the "Britain."

"Ready, Sam?" called Andy.

"As ready as I'll ever be for this falling angel business!" complained the mechanic from his position close to the door.

"Shoot, Joe," snapped the boy. He opened the door leading from the living room to the outer air, braced his hands against the jambs and stood poised, ready for action.

Joe turned behind the dirigible and then flew straight at the mammoth flippers, banking over slightly to avoid the rudder and its supporting wires, then over again to the other side to skim just over the broad top of the envelope. In another instant he was flying straight along the flat surface which extended from bow to stern on the very top of the ribbed hull. Andy crouched and prepared to leap. The right wing of the "Apex" lifted and the tremendous roar of the two motors died to nothing. For a brief moment the mighty amphibian seemed to hang suspended over the "Britain" as her nose swung around toward the water.

Andy took a long breath, gripped the release ring of his parachute with his fingers and leaped, arms and legs extended like a cat. Although there was less than twenty feet to go, it seemed to take him years and years. The sloping edge beside the catwalk atop the airship drew closer and closer as he fell. It came to him that if he landed on anything but the catwalk itself, he might fall, as Sam had suggested, through the fabric of the ship. Or, if not that, he would slip off the smooth, sloping

surface and slide down to a three thousand foot drop.

Crash! With a force that almost knocked the breath from his body he landed on elbows and knees and slid directly toward the edge. He pushed down with his hands, feeling them sting under the friction. His outspread fingers slowly slipped over the edge of the catwalk, then, under the resistance of arms, legs and body, he came to a stop. Phew!

There was another crash beside him and another. He jumped up and, feeling very dizzy on the narrow platform which looked off into space, saw Sam, flat on his stomach, looking very much like a fat, tired frog. And just beyond Sam, still sliding slightly, was the thin, small figure of Sonny, clutching in his arms a very frightened dog who yelped in fear while he struggled to wriggle out of the clutching arms and rush toward his master.

The "Apex," her motor roaring and the wind howling through her wires and struts, was diving toward the water after a terrific sideslip. But, Andy saw with relief, she had not crashed into the dirigible!

Sam and Sonny were sitting up, now. The mechanic was scared and did not care who knew it. Sonny was white of face and somewhat sheepish-looking as Andy gazed at him in astonishment.

"I had to come, Andy," he apologized. "I realized that Dick could work the radio on the 'Apex' and that you'd need me here. And so I brought Scotty, too, to bring us luck."

There was no use scolding the boy for his reckless faithfulness, Andy realized, and, now that the youngster and the mascot were actually aboard, he was mighty glad they had come. He helped Sonny to his feet and patted the little dog, who was still much subdued after his fall.

"Let's find the way down to the cabin," he said at last. "If the wind should rise, this wouldn't be the most comfortable place in the world to be standing on."

"I'll tell the world!" grumbled Sam. "I feel like a cat walking on the ridgepole of the Woolworth Building! Oh, boy, if my foot should slip! My toes are all curled up inside my shoes!"

CHAPTER XIV

ABOARD THE "BRITAIN"

AT A point almost half way between bow and stern there was a ladder made of aluminum rungs which projected out of the dirigible's envelope. Andy, Sam and Sonny looked at it in some doubt, for only a small part of it was visible from where they stood on the catwalk atop the mammoth hull.

They could see the crude ladder leading downward over two of the many ridges formed by the bow-to-stern-ribs, then it disappeared from sight as it followed the bulge of the surface down and under to the cabins below.

"Listen, Andy," exclaimed Sam, "I don't mind shinnying down the rungs we can see. And I don't much mind the thought of the first of those we can't see, for they must lead straight up and down. But how about those near the bottom, where the hull begins to slope inwards. We will be clinging to those rungs

like three flies crawling along the ceiling, won't we?"

"Almost," admitted Andy.

"Me, I'm too fat to do any trapeze stunts like that!" protested the other. "I guess I'll just stay up here and starve until I get thin enough to make it. Here's another bright idea, who is going to carry Scotty down?"

That was something of a problem, Andy admitted to himself. It would be difficult enough, clinging to those backward-slanting rungs without holding a twenty-five pound dog. It would take a man of superhuman strength to do it clinging with one hand and two feet to the rungs, his body hanging down over a three thousand foot drop, holding a dog in the other hand.

The "Apex" appeared from beneath the dirigible and roared overhead, Dick leaning out of the open cockpit, watching them to see if they were safe. Andy waved to him with far more assurance than he really felt at that moment.

At last he was struck with a bright idea. He unbuttoned his loose-fitting coveralls from

neckband to waist and held the two sides wide open.

“Here, Sonny,” he said, “see if you can stuff Scotty inside here.”

It took both Sonny and Sam to do the trick. Pushing at the whimpering dog and pulling at the garment while Andy held his breath to make more room, they tugged and strained until they had, at last, buttoned it again. Then, despite the seriousness of the whole affair they stood back and laughed until tears came to their eyes.

Andy looked like an overstuffed couch. Immensely fat, he was, and looked almost ready to burst. Patches of tan and white fur stuck out from the bulging openings where the cloth could not be made to meet. And just under the boy's chin, looking about with astonished, wistful eyes, was Scotty's head, his mouth open and his tongue hanging out as he panted under the pressure of the tight cloth squeezing his body.

“Well, this will be all right as long as the buttons hold,” said the boy. “Come on, now, let's go.”

Very gingerly he turned around, felt with his feet for the first rung and, holding himself very close to the surface, he began to work his way down, step by step, followed by Sonny, then by Sam who, having had a good laugh at Andy's expense, seemed to have forgotten his fears and was now the most cheerful one in the group. At first, the descent was not at all bad. There was little slope to the surface. Scotty's weight acted as a ballast, pressing him down hard on the rungs.

With the passing of each ridge, the slope became steeper until at last the ladder was perpendicular, straight up and down. Scotty's weight was now pulling at Andy's shoulders and the boy took each downward step very cautiously, feeling for the next step with one foot while letting himself downward inch by inch. Then came another ridge. The next step was at the beginning of the inward slope and Andy felt a little sick as he finally found it with his searching foot.

The crossing of that panel seemed bad enough, for the slope was not severe. When he reached the next, however, he almost ceased

his slow descent. The weight of the dog was pressing down upon his stomach, now, and he was clinging with hands and feet to hold himself on to the ladder. One false step would plunge him into the ocean, half a mile beneath. He thought of little Sonny above him and wondered how he was getting along. But he did not have breath enough to ask.

Somehow he passed another ridge and felt exactly as Sam had described it, like a fly crawling on the ceiling. If it had not been for Scotty, it would not have been so hard. But the pup seemed to be getting heavier and heavier every minute. Suddenly Andy remembered that the crews of these airships must be in the habit of crawling up and down the sides of these air monsters under every possible condition of wind and weather. He thought of this envelope forging through the air at 80 miles an hour during a raging storm. Someone had to crawl to the top, occasionally, to inspect the fabric. Why, what he was doing, then, was a cinch! The next four or five steps seemed easy.

Then, suddenly, he found himself descending

through a hole cut in the side of a cabin. He was safe!

"Only three or four more steps!" he called to encourage the two struggling, silent figures above him.

In the next moment he was standing upon a deck, reaching up to help Sonny, then Sam, down through the hole. Scotty began to squirm violently and with the greatest relief in the world the boy unbuttoned his coveralls and put the dog on the deck. As soon as his four feet were upon a solid surface, the little dog shook himself vigorously and then, looking about curiously, began to sniff the air. To the amazement of all, his fur began to rise on his neck and he began that low, rumbling growl which he always reserved for those whom he hated or feared.

"Pipe down, Scotty," commanded Andy. The dog subsided, but the hair on his neck remained stiff and straight. "Come on, fellows, let's find those three birds we saw in the cabin window. It's funny they didn't meet us here."

They had entered the envelope covering the

ship at a point which seemed to be a long, fabric-covered passageway, leading from bow to stern. Its dim, gray interior seemed to stretch away for miles and miles in the distance. At regular intervals, square blocks of lights indicated windows cut in the envelope.

"The bow is this way," said Sam. "That's where the cabins must be."

Single file, the still-growling Scotty in the lead, the three walked along the narrow passageway. At last they came to a ladder which led to a door just above the level of the corridor. They hesitated a moment, then Andy, having picked up Scotty, climbed the few steps and opened the door. For an instant, he stood there, too amazed to move.

"Forward march," chirped Sam, "you're holding up the traffic!"

One after another they entered the door and stood stock still, looking about them with wide open eyes. They were standing upon the threshold of a room the like of which none of them had ever expected to see in a ship of the air. Despite the fact that it had been described

scores of times, the most vivid word-pictures had never done it full justice.

They looked upon a full sized restaurant, containing tables and chairs to seat fifty diners. Its roof was two stories in height, for a balcony ran around the four sides of the beautiful room. Opposite them there was a sweeping grand staircase leading up to the second floor. The walls were panelled in dull, shining mahogany upon which hung many handsome paintings. A thick Chinese carpet extended from wall to wall.

"Sam, I've never seen a more beautiful room!" marvelled Andy, almost in a whisper, as though he were in a museum, or a library.

Sam looked at him, his merry eyes full of astonishment. Sonny, too, was mute. He was too excited to speak. At last Andy walked along the right wall and opened one of the many doors that opened into the panelled wall.

"Look here, fellows!" he called. "Here's a stateroom that would do credit to the 'Majestic' or the 'Leviathan.'

All three crowded inside. The room was

smaller than most of the expensive cabins on transatlantic steamships, but it was no less handsomely furnished. Two berths, their damask spreads embroidered with a coat of arms and the airship's name, were affixed, one over the other, against the left wall. A mahogany writing desk, a dressing table, a wardrobe and three comfortable chairs completed the furnishings. A soft rug covered the floor. A door in the wall at the right stood ajar and the boys caught a glimpse of a tiled bathroom within.

There was a sudden warning growl from Scotty, who darted into the dining saloon.

"Come here, Scotty!" Andy wheeled around as he called the dog. At the other end of the long room stood three men, staring at the boys in utter astonishment.

But they were not a whit more surprised than Andy, Sam and Sonny, who gazed at them as if unable to believe their eyes. The dog, having reluctantly obeyed his master's sharp summons, now stood at his feet, growling continuously.

CHAPTER XV

ANDY MEETS AN OLD ENEMY

SAM was first to break the strained silence.

“Well, well, well! If it isn’t our dear old friend and shipmate, Terrible Tim, the famous flier who flew across the South Pole without ever seeing it! Herbert Brewster! And as I live and breathe, those are his two cronies with him! What a lovely little reunion, ’way up here on the Arctic Circle!”

Brewster’s face darkened in anger. He was no more pleased to see Andy and his two companions than they were to see him. He had a sudden superstitious hunch that this boy was born to checkmate him, to cause him trouble in every project that he undertook. Down, down, the upright ladder of honesty he had descended, with Andy Lane to cause him defeat and disgrace at every step. And now, in this final gigantic effort, which meant millions and millions, Andy Lane had suddenly appeared on the spot.

He was a jinx, thought Brewster, and there would be no success until he was forever removed from his way. He made a sudden gesture toward his hip pocket. Then, thinking better of it, he advanced across the room, weaving in and out among the dining tables, his hand advanced in apparent friendship.

“Andy Lane!” he said, cordially. “This is no time or place to rake up old quarrels. We’re all in trouble together. Let’s patch up our differences and be friends.”

“It’s pretty hard, Brewster,” retorted Andy, coldly, “to forget that on eight or ten different occasions you’ve tried to crash the planes we were flying!”

“I know it,” confessed the other, his olive-skinned face a picture of regret. “I don’t blame you at all. But all that is over now, I assure you. We are all marooned here on this helpless ship and it’s better to be friends than enemies.

“But tell me,” he continued, puzzled, “how in the world did you get aboard? We were in the control room and saw your flying boat zooming around, but we never dreamed that

anyone could board a dirigible from a plane!"

"Jumped out of her to the top of your bag," explained Andy, briefly. "How did *you* get aboard?"

"It was very simple," lied Brewster, easily. "We were very anxious to make the return voyage to England and scoured New York for the tickets. None were to be had at any price. So we stowed away, intending to report to the captain when the 'Britain' was well on her way and pay whatever he asked for the passage. The next thing we knew we were alone in the air."

"You're a good flier," countered Andy. "How does it happen that you weren't able to start the motors and go somewhere, or, at least, report to the world on the radio where you were." Andy cast a warning glance at Sonny, who was about to say something about the low-wave messages.

"My dear boy, as if we had not tried!" exclaimed Brewster. "None of us are radio operators. On the various airplanes we have flown, we have had very simple sets installed. All we had to do to send messages was to throw a

switch and tap the key. I must show you the radio room on this airship. It was so complicated that we could not even find the right switch to turn on the current.

“And as for operating this airship,” he continued—and this time he spoke so earnestly that Andy thought he was telling the truth—“we did start two of the motors during the gale but the ship immediately became so unmanageable that we stopped them again. The next time we attempted to start them we had no better results, so we came to the conclusion that a five motored gas bag could not be operated by three men.”

“Well, we are going to take a whirl at it,” stated Andy, grimly. “Perhaps six of us can turn the trick.”

“Excellent,” smiled Brewster. “Let me show you the control car and we will try to get underway immediately.”

He led the little group down a flight of stairs into another large room which was apparently the crew’s mess hall, being filled with row after row of long wooden tables. Turning to the right he opened another door behind which was

another stairway. Sam, always suspicious of Brewster and his gang, allowed the others to go downstairs first. He said later that he never liked any of Brewster's buddies to get behind him for fear they would knife him in the back.

At the bottom of the winding flight of aluminum stairs they found themselves in the control room, or pilot house, which projected downward out of the envelope. It was light and airy, with a series of windows around all four sides. The interior was so filled with wheels, levers, gauges, dials and other instruments of operation and navigation that Andy felt a moment of bewilderment and hopelessness. He knew that the "Britain" was flown with a crew of fifty men. How could he ever have hoped that he and Sam could have steered her through the skies to a safe landing?

"Me, I'm going to have a look-see at the engines," stated Sam. "Then we can come back and see what all these brass wheels and doo-hickies are for."

"After we've looked at the engines," suggested Sonny, eagerly. "Let's go and look at the radio room."

So back they walked through the endless corridor that ran along the keel of the great ship until they reached a door that led outside. Sam opened the door and, without hesitation, stepped out on a narrow gangway, or catwalk, that led out to a little car which hung suspended from the envelope, fifteen or twenty feet from the fabric. The others, crowded in the doorway, watched him as he studied the engine, walking around and around it, touching it here and there, tracing gas and oil lines as he familiarized himself with its mechanism. In a surprisingly short time he returned, looking very much pleased with himself.

“Andy, I’ve always wanted to operate the perfect motor, and that’s as perfect a one as I’ve ever seen in my life. I’ll be as busy when we get three or four of them started as a flock of kids playing puss in the corner, but I’m fairly itching to start!”

Sam’s serene confidence that he could run the motors all alone raised Andy’s hopes. Perhaps it wasn’t such a wild scheme after all! But that maze of instruments in the control room would take a lot of studying.

"Now for the radio room," suggested Sonny, eagerly.

Brewster led the way upstairs. On the same deck with the dining saloon and the lower tier of cabins was the most complete wireless installation the boy had ever seen in his life.

"Why it looks like the outfit on an ocean liner!" he exclaimed in delighted amazement. The walls were painted a clean and business-like white. There were two complete sets, one for the high, the other for the very low wave lengths. "These sets must have a sending range of two thousand miles and should be able to receive Arlington and the Eiffel Tower at any point on the trip!"

Under the pretense of examining the sending key, Sonny glanced at the dials on the short wave set. His heart beat wildly. It was tuned to send and receive at 9.5 meters, just as he had expected. Brewster had been lying, then! They *had* been sending those messages which had so mystified him. Of course he had known it when his loop had directed the "Apex" toward the drifting dirigible. But this proved it. Nevertheless, his face showed no trace of

his excitement when he turned back to his comrades.

"What do you think of it, Sonny?" smiled Andy.

"It's perfect!"

"All right, then, sit down there and tell the world we've boarded the 'Britain' and are going to try to bring her back to land."

Sonny's fingers itched to be at the dials and he needed no urging to seat himself before the transmitter.

"See you later, Sonny," called Andy. "We're going to try to start her up. Keep your parachute pack on your back and tell Joe to keep circling us in the 'Apex' until he sees whether we can fly her or not."

CHAPTER XVI

CAPTURED!

“JUST about the only thing that we know about her,” explained Brewster, as Andy, Sam and their ex-enemy’s two cronies stood once more in the bewildering control room, “is that these levers, here, work the valves. There are twenty small balloons of gas inside of the big envelope and you can let the gas out of any of them by pulling these levers.”

“Well,” said Andy, thoughtfully, “the first thing we ought to do is to straighten her out. A dirigible ought to ride on an even keel just as well as an airplane. She’s nose heavy now.”

“I know it,” agreed the other. “She nearly sank into the water the other day and we dropped a lot of our water ballast by working these gadgets here,” he pointed to another row of levers. “We dropped too much, apparently, for the ship began to rise with terrific speed. Then I valved some of the gas out of

her with these levers and stopped her from rising any more, but she remained in this tilted position and I didn't dare waste any more of her gas."

"What are these two wheels for?"

"We found that out when we started to fly her," Brewster grew pale at the recollection. "This one in the front is a steering wheel. Works the ship from left to right, just like the wheel on an automobile. This one over here works the flippers and noses her up or down, but don't turn it too much, or she'll plunge up and down like a roller coaster."

"That doesn't sound so complicated," mused Andy. "If we can figure out what these other things are for, it seems to me that an experienced airplane pilot ought to have half a chance of flying the dizzy thing."

"Perhaps," admitted the other. "You're welcome to try and we'll be glad to be taken back to land. These men of mine are cowardly and stupid. They grew panicky every time anything happened that they didn't expect."

Andy wondered why Brewster's companions

did not resent the slur. But they stood there, paying not the slightest heed to the charges of cowardice. At last the boy decided that they were all cowards at heart—even Brewster. It was sheer cowardice that they hadn't blundered along with the dirigible until they had either flown her to safety or crashed her in the water. Unless, of course, they preferred to drift until someone rescued them. Those constant messages, what had they been for? Did they expect someone to pick them up? But there was no time, now, to puzzle these things out.

"Sam," he said, suddenly, "here is a telephone system that probably leads to all parts of the ship. There'll probably be a 'phone in each of the motor cars."

"Right!" agreed the mechanic, instantly. "There was one in the car I examined."

"Fine. Now let's try to get the ship level and then you go back and start one engine on each side. Run them as slowly as they'll turn the propellers, at first, 'till we see how the ship acts."

It was queer, Andy thought, that Brewster

and his men did not offer to assist. But no, they just stood there, watching everything, volunteering nothing.

“Which are the ballast valves that you used?” snapped Andy.

“These two raised the rear of the ship. These two here raised the bow.”

Andy noticed, just over the rows of levers, a spirit level, which showed what he had noticed when he had seen the “Britain” from the air. The bubble was hard against the rear end of the level, showing that the long ship was far down by the bow. Very gingerly indeed, he pulled at the foremost lever. Although he felt no rise in the platform beneath his feet, the bubble responded slowly, moving slightly toward the center.

“Good,” Andy muttered. “She’s lifting, but we don’t want to empty all the ballast out of the same tank. We may need that water later.” So he pulled a little on the second and third levers. The bubble gradually rose. In ten minutes, the great dirigible was riding on an even keel. Andy felt a great surge of hopefulness in his heart. He had conquered the first

obstacle. He would meet and overcome all the rest, one by one. He knew that it seemed absurd for one boy who had never been within the cabins of a dirigible before to even think he could fly her, but luck had been with him so far, and he would push it to the limit!

“Beat it, Sam,” he grinned, “and start the first two engines. When you get to the cars, telephone me, so I’ll know how to get you if I want you.”

The call box buzzed its first signal in three or four minutes. Sam’s voice came over the wire, then ceased. In five minutes there was a roar from the engine, heard clearly in the control car. The nose of the dirigible began to swing slowly to the left. They had started! Andy was so excited that his hands trembled as he leaped for the steering wheel and swung it over to the right to correct for the thrust of the single motor. Then the roar quieted down to a purr and the nose swung to the right. Andy straightened her out again by swinging the wheel back to the left.

The telephone buzzed again and Sam’s voice was full of excitement.

"It's a cinch, Andy! Here goes the one on the left side."

Again there was the roar of a starting engine. Again the bow swung under the thrust of the whirling propeller, this time to the right. A little left rudder and the ship was steering straight ahead again. Easy! But suddenly Andy noticed that the altimeter was showing a steady drop. It had been at 3,000 feet. Now it was 2,700 and as he watched it, the hand flickered down another hundred feet. What should he do, drop more ballast? He glanced doubtfully at Brewster, but the crook offered him no assistance. Just stood there with a sneering smile on his face, which he instantly changed to a friendly smirk when he saw the boy looking at him. No, he could not waste more ballast. Andy knew that instinctively. On the "Apex" he would have pulled back on the joystick. Of course! The wheel that controlled the flippers! He leaped to the other wheel and twirled it cautiously. The nose lifted and the great bag began to climb. He watched the spirit level. The bow was lifting too much. He twirled the wheel again. Ah, she had straightened out!

He stood still a moment, wiping perspiration from his forehead. Well, he had learned two lessons. With any luck, the rest would come, one by one.

That instrument to the right of the steering wheel was the air speed indicator. It was the same brand as that used on the "Apex" and it indicated a forward speed of ten miles an hour.

"Where are the charts, Brewster?" he asked.

"In the chart room," replied the other, pointing to a doorway at the rear of the control room. Andy hesitated a moment, wondering how far to trust this man. Sonny and Sam were both at distant parts of the ship but there was no reason to think that Brewster would wish to commit suicide.

"You and the best of your pilots take these two wheels, will you?" he asked. "Keep her straightened out while I have a look at the charts. There's no sense in flying around without heading for somewhere."

Without hesitation Brewster took the steering wheel and the younger of his companions took the elevator wheel. Andy watched them

for a moment, then went into the chart room. Once again his eyes opened in wonder. At the forward end of the room was a long, high table, upon which was room for a large scale map of the entire North Atlantic. In a long series of pigeon holes above the table were rolled maps; enough of them, Andy thought, to show the topography of nearly every country in the world. Various dials against the wall showed the height, speed, number of revolutions per minute of each engine—Andy did not examine the rest. The commander of the ship could sit at a large desk near the other wall and see from the dials and gauges almost everything necessary to know about his ship and her position in the air. A comfortable lounge and three leather chairs completed the furnishings of the snug little workroom.

Andy found the map he searched for. He knew where the “Apex” had been when they first sighted the dirigible. He measured the distance to land and calculated rapidly. It should not be difficult, he thought, to make for the Norwegian coast. With any luck he should be able to keep the “Britain” in the air until

he was over dry land. Then, in an emergency, he could valve out the gas. The ship would probably be wrecked, he realized, but their passengers and the cargo of gold would be safe. The gold! Strangely enough, he had forgotten it in the excitement of boarding the dirigible and of attempting to start her. But if he knew Brewster—and he thought that he did—he could not imagine *his* forgetting five million dollars for a single moment. Well, all he, Sam and Sonny could do was to watch their steps as carefully as possible and allow the future to take care of itself.

He scribbled the compass bearing that should be followed on a slip of paper and hastened back to the control room. In an instant he knew that Brewster and his pals were hopeless bunglers when it came to operating a dirigible. Her bow was low again and she had swung far off her course. Andy leaped for the elevator wheel and brought the nose up to normal. Then, without ceremony, he took the steering wheel away from Brewster and straightened the great ship back to her course.

“Sorry, old man,” laughed Brewster, rather

embarrassed, "we don't seem to get the knack of steering this thing, do we?"

Andy did not bother to reply. He wondered how they had ever piloted an airplane to within a few miles of the South Pole when they had no more "air sense" than they were now exhibiting. But there was little use to argue. He glanced at his slip of paper and then swung the nose of the "Britain" around toward Norway. As he looked away from the compass, he thought he saw a look of anxiety pass between Brewster and his two confederates. But he might have been mistaken.

The "Apex" was still flying around the airship in great, wide circles. As she swept past the control room windows, Andy's heart warmed toward those two faithful friends aboard her. He saw Dick standing upon the wing, tuning up the silent engine with the same care that Sam had used on his frequent inspections. There was no need, he thought, to keep the "Apex" out here any longer. He had learned enough about the dirigible to believe they could muddle along somehow and he knew that since they had broadcast her position to

the world there would be scores and scores of warships speeding toward them at this very moment. If anything went wrong, they would probably be rescued within a day's time at the most. He saw Dick descend from the wing. He studied the switchboard of the telephone and noticed the letters W. R. Taking it to mean "Wireless Room," he pushed at the button and in a few moments Sonny's voice responded.

"Sonny," Andy directed, "Send a message and tell the 'Apex' that we're sitting on top of the world. Tell Joe he'd better beat it for Norway, find a landing place and stay there until he hears from us."

"Good stuff!" answered Sonny. "Listen, Andy, you wouldn't believe the number of stations that are trying to call us. I've never heard such excited messages in my life."

"Well, enjoy yourself listening to them," laughed the young commander. "We're getting under way for dry land."

He pressed the button leading to the extension from which Sam had last reported. The mechanic's voice came back promptly.

"Sam, how about starting two more of the motors?"

"Cinch!" Sam sounded enthusiastic.

"Go ahead, then. Start 'em slowly. Then, if everything goes well, we'll speed them all up a little."

"Fine, but give me a little time. I'm all out of breath now from running back and forth between these cars. I'm too fat to run but I won't be by tonight if this keeps up!"

Andy cut off with a laugh. Looking out of the window he saw the "Apex" bank over, waggle her wings in a gesture of salute and head away toward land. He and his little gang were alone. He was conscious of a sudden feeling of loneliness. He turned back to the steering wheel, then stopped short. He was gazing straight into the ugly black snout of an automatic, held in the steady hand of his old enemy!

CHAPTER XVII

SAM ESCAPES

GONE was the mask of pleasantry and assumed friendship from Brewster's face.

"You've meddled in my affairs once too often, Lane," he snarled. "I can put you to use, this time, and I'm going to do it. If you want to live a few hours longer, just put this ship on a course exactly southwest and keep her there! I'll watch the compass and if I even suspect that you're double-crossing me, I'll take great pleasure in shooting you!

"Now, Stengel, you go back and take care of that fat mechanic. See that he gets the motors going and keeps them running. Shoot if he acts up." One of his companions disappeared silently, drawing his automatic as he moved out of Andy's range of vision. "You, Matthews," said Brewster, turning to the other man who awaited his orders, "take care of that baby in the operating room. Tie him up and

put him where he'll be safe 'till we decide what to do with them all. Then get the 'Wanderer' on the radio and tell Hanson we are flying to meet him. Tell him to put on full speed, because these fools have let the cat out of the bag. Everyone in the world knows where we are, now, and we'll have to speed things up."

During all of these instructions, the muzzle of the automatic had never wavered from Andy's head. At that moment, Scotty ambled into the room, sniffing the air and growling deep in his chest. Where he had been, Andy did not know, but it was clear that the pup suspected something wrong.

"Is that the dog that bit me when we were down on the ice at the South Pole?" demanded Brewster.

"Yes, but let me warn you right now. If you hurt that dog, you'll never set foot on land again, see?" retorted Andy, holding his temper with the greatest difficulty. He knew that it would be suicide to rush Brewster, but he could not stand there and see the crook harm the pup. Brewster hesitated. "If you touch him, I'll crash this ship within the next ten

seconds!" warned Andy. Then he knew he had won. Brewster was really a coward and would not attempt to call his bluff, fearing that the threat would be carried out.

There was a sudden increased vibration in the fabric of the airship. Another motor had been started and was driving her ahead at a greater speed.

"Take the helm," snapped Brewster. "Hold her on her course."

Andy went to the wheel and straightened the ship out on her new course. A few minutes later her speed increased again. Sam had started all four motors, now, and was tuning them up, one at a time, to half cruising speed. Little by little the pointer of the air speed meter worked around the dial until at last it showed that the great ship was plowing through the air at forty miles an hour. The telephone buzzed. Brewster stepped quickly to the instrument.

"Hello," he called and listened, his revolver ready in his other hand. "Yes, Allen, . . . just a minute," he turned to Andy. "Can you stand any greater speed?"

"Not till I get used to the controls," the other answered, briefly.

"Lane says to hold her as she is, Allen . . . What? What?" Then he listened silently. "Oh, hello, Stengel, Allen is taken care of? Good. Stand by, then, 'till further orders."

He replaced the receiver on its hook with an expression of glowing satisfaction. Then he turned to Andy.

"All right, now, Lane. I'll sit over here and take it easy. You just go ahead and see that we stay on the proper course. And keep that mutt of yours away from me, or I'll forget myself and spoil him!"

Andy, with cold rage in his heart, called the belligerent collie and made him lie down at his feet. Then he turned his full attention to keeping the world's greatest airship straight on her southwesterly course.

He realized, now, that the best he could do was to let events take their course. Sometime, between now and the moment when the dirigible arrived at Brewster's destination, there might come a lucky break. It was up to him to watch his opportunity and take the fullest

advantage of it when it arrived. He knew that Sam and Sonny were both captured by the enemy and he feared mightily for his brave little friend. Sam was too valuable to lose; the enemy would see that he was safe, at any rate. They might need him in an emergency. They had a radio operator, however, and did not need Sonny. Andy gritted his teeth as he realized his helplessness.

The great dirigible plowed through the air as a battleship forges ahead through the solid seas. Luck was all with the inexperienced pilot, for the air, though bitter cold, was calm as a fish pond, and there was not the slightest swinging or lifting of the deck beneath the control room. If only the weather would hold out until he had accustomed himself to the various controls! A storm now would sweep them, completely out of control, at the will of the wind, for at present Andy had his hands completely occupied in keeping the "Britain" steady on her course and on an even keel.

As the morning progressed, tiny clouds filled the sky. As the long, gas-filled envelope slipped into the shadow of one of these clouds,

the cooling air would cause her to descend and he had to twirl the wheel of the elevators to keep her level. Then she would emerge into sunlight again and lift with the added buoyancy of the warmed gases. Once again the elevators needed attention.

“This is the first clear day we’ve had since we broke loose at Lakehurst,” remarked Brewster, who was watching him with interest. “You can see why we had trouble when we started the motors. We weren’t anxious to start them again, though I think we might have done so today if you hadn’t appeared upon the scene to save us the trouble.”

Andy ignored him. The air was growing warmer, now, and he noticed that the altimeter was gradually rising. The dirigible was lifting so slowly that he was scarcely conscious of it, but rising she was, undoubtedly, for the pointer of the altimeter showed 3,800 feet. Andy searched his mind for the reason. At last he realized that under the midday sun the warm air had caused the gas in the bags to expand. Should he valve out some of the precious gas? No, there were many miles to

cover before the end of the voyage. So he let her continue her slow rise, resolved not to let any gas escape until it became dangerous to continue.

At five thousand feet, he said to Brewster,

“I’d advise you to give the engines more power. I think that with a little more speed, we can nose down a bit and hold our present altitude.”

Brewster rose and looked out of the window. It was perfectly clear that he did not feel at home in the “Britain.” Her very size worried him, for he was accustomed to the relatively small dimensions of airplanes and had allowed the monstrous air liner to overawe him. He glanced at the altimeter and then at the horizon in perplexity. But before he had replied to Andy’s suggestion, the boy saw him start in sudden surprise and then reach for the binoculars which stood on a rack over the window. He aimed them at the horizon dead ahead and stared long and fixedly. Andy followed the direction of the glasses and saw a smudge of black smoke far, far in the distance.

The crook replaced the glasses and hurriedly

rang the telephone bell marked "W. R." In another moment his pal in the wireless room had answered.

"Have you heard from the 'Wanderer?' . . . How far away is she now? . . . What's that? Three hundred miles? . . . All right." He rang off and immediately rang the engine rooms, one after another. The man who had captured Sam answered at last.

"Turn your engines on to three-quarters speed," Brewster shouted excitedly. "Go out in the rear car and start the fifth engine, too. There's a ship on the horizon I don't like the looks of and I want to circle away from it. Make it snappy, now."

One after another the pointers on the dials of the five tachometers flickered upward, showing that the engine speeds were being increased. Andy found it increasingly difficult to steer, for each wheel was almost a full job for one man. The bow of the great ship began to swing alarmingly.

"All right, Lane," snapped Brewster, "turn due west now, and fly around that ship so she won't see us."

"You'll have to take the elevator wheel, then," replied Andy, coldly. "With this speed, I've got all I can handle now."

Brewster placed his automatic within easy reach and took his position at the wheel which controlled the up and down movements of the ship. But he was very clumsy at it. Despite his best efforts the "Britain" pursued a wavy course through the sky, as though she was riding over great waves of air. In less than five minutes of flying due west, the smoke which had so worried Brewster was lost again beneath the horizon. The "Britain" was again headed on her old course, to the southwest.

The telephone buzzed so loudly that the nervous crook jumped at its imperious call. Taking his gun with him so that Andy might have no opportunity to catch him unarmed, he picked up the receiver, keeping one eye on the pilot all the while.

"Hello! . . . Yes. . . . *What?*" he fairly shrieked the question into the mouthpiece. "You go up to the radio room, see that the boy is safe, take Matthews and *find that man!* Search every inch of the ship, inside and out

until you *do* find him. If he puts up a fight, shoot him!"

He put down the receiver and glared at Andy.

"Your fat friend is loose somewhere in this ship," he said, slowly. "If you happen to see him before I do, you'd better advise him to jump overboard. It will be the pleasantest thing that can happen to him now!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PIRATES WALK THE PLANK

BY FOUR o'clock that afternoon, Andy was as tired as though he had been on watch for a week. The strain of flying the thousand foot dirigible without knowing what more than half the instruments were for, was terrific. He knew that their progress to this hour had been more a matter of good weather and luck than anything else. The knowledge that Sonny was tied up, helpless, waiting for assistance, jarred on the young pilot's raw nerves like the beating of an anvil. The uncertainty of Sam's whereabouts also added to the tenseness of the strain. He was somewhere in that vast dirigible, awaiting an opportunity to recapture the "Britain" in the face of three armed and desperate men—of that much Andy was certain. But he also knew that if the mechanic made a single false move, the air pirates would not hesitate to shoot him in his tracks.

Brewster was like a man possessed. He stood at the elevator wheel, his revolver within easy reach, paying more attention to Andy than to the proper operation of his wheel. The bow dipped and fell, the mighty liner of the air plunged wildly through the air, yet Brewster seemed to care little, as long as she was forging ahead on her straight course to the southwest.

There had been no thought of luncheon. Andy had eaten nothing since before dawn. He was tired and faint. But Brewster stood over him like a madman, disregarding everything but the immediate matter at hand. Every few minutes the telephone would buzz and the leader of the pirates would answer a call from some far part of the ship, leaving his elevator wheel for Andy to control. His two companions were reporting the progress of the search for Sam and each message left Brewster more irritable and nervous than the previous.

As the afternoon wore on, Matthews apparently abandoned the search and devoted his entire attention to the radio set, for frequent reports came to Brewster from the line lead-

ing to the wireless room. These reports seemed to please the leader more than those from the other pirate who continued his hunt for Sam. More and more frequently, now, Brewster abandoned his wheel to search the horizon ahead long and carefully through his binoculars.

Scotty crouched at Andy's feet, his nose resting on his forepaws, watching Brewster with his steady brown eyes. Scarcely once during the entire long day had he relaxed his pose of watchfulness. Brewster was conscious of the dog's somber eyes, for he glanced at him from time to time with ill-concealed enmity. Andy was sure that had the crook not been afraid of some desperate act of revenge, he would have shot the pup long before now.

At 5.20, Brewster, who was again searching the horizon with his glasses, suddenly turned away from the window and in a state of great excitement began to press, one after another, all the telephone call buttons. Stengel answered at last.

"Stengel," cried Brewster, "we've sighted the 'Wanderer.' Never mind the mechanic,

now, but keep your eyes peeled and your gun handy and shoot him on sight. Go to the strong room and start to move the gold to the nearest window. I'll send Matt to help you. Listen for the buzzer and when I ring it, stand by to shut down the engines!"

He cut off and gave Matthews the same orders. Then he turned back to Andy, his face showing his triumphant delight.

"In an hour or so, Lane, I'm going to make you a present of a million dollar dirigible. It's too bad that I'll be forced to smash all the engines with a sledge hammer, and the radio set as well, but you'll enjoy yourself aboard her for a week or two at least while she drifts around the sky. You'll have the most luxurious places to eat and sleep in that you can possibly imagine and you'll all live like kings until so much of the gas has leaked away that you can't keep afloat any longer. Of course, there's a chance that you'll be rescued, but I notice that there is a strong wind from the south which is, unfortunately, quite likely to blow you northward over the Arctic Ocean and even over the ice fields. But then, I'm doing you a

favor, perhaps. Surely the man who has flown over the South Pole should know what it is like over the North Pole, too."

He grinned evilly at the boy, who made no reply. There was little to be gained by arguing with an armed enemy.

The tiny thread of smoke which had so excited Brewster was growing nearer and more distinct each moment. Without the aid of binoculars, Andy could now see the black hull of the steamer, her slanting radio masts and her two squat funnels. At length he was able to recognize it as a steam yacht of tremendous speed, plowing at full speed through the northern waters.

When it was but three or four miles away, Brewster nosed the dirigible down, descending by the sheer push of the engines and the pressure of the elevators. Closer and closer they came to the yacht. They were heading nearly into the wind, so there was no need to circle around.

Brewster stepped to the telephone.

"Matt," he called, when a voice answered, "is the gold ready? . . . All right, you go and

take a sledge-hammer to the radio set. Tell Stengel to slow down the forward engines and kill the rear ones, then to stand by for signals.”

A bulky figure flashed across the control room floor with the speed of a projectile in flight. As Brewster turned away from the telephone, Sam leaped upon him, one arm about his neck, the other grasping the hand which held his gun. Like a flash of light Scotty, too, rushed into action. The next moment the two men and the dog were plunging and thrashing around the floor. Andy hesitated only long enough to spin the elevator wheel and lift the nose of the dirigible lest she should dive into the water.

Brewster, with surprising strength, had rolled the mechanic over on his back and held him there, one hand trying to throttle him while with the other hand, in which he held the gun, he struck at Scotty, who was trying to leap at the pirate's throat. The dog had ceased growling and was leaping and falling, leaping and falling, as Brewster struck at him. In another moment, Andy realized, the pirate would be able to bring the muzzle of his gun around

and shoot the enraged pup. But Andy had covered the few steps with flying feet.

"Down, Scot!" he panted, as he threw himself at Brewster. Caught off guard, the pirate fell heavily and in the next instant, Sam had scrambled around and pinned Brewster to the floor. Scotty stood still, whining and trembling, eager to have it out with the man who was struggling with his friends. But Brewster was through. Andy had his gun and after one glance at it, Brewster had ceased to fight.

Sam looked around the cabin. In one corner was a heaving rope, used during the process of landing. In an incredibly short space of time, the pirate was trussed up and definitely out of action.

"Come on Sam," snapped Andy, "let's get the others!" The rest was all too easy. Matthews was standing in the wreck of the radio room, a heavy hammer in his hand, surveying the result of his work. At Sam's curt command he looked around, found himself staring into the beady eye of the automatic and raised his hands without a word. In three minutes, he, too, was lying on the floor, hands and

feet bound tight with strong manilla rope.

Stengel was in the forward gondola on the left side, waiting for orders from the control room. One glance at the gun was enough for him, too. He made no effort to reach for his own, which was in his coat pocket, for he knew that the others had the drop on him. Sam and Andy marched him to the control room and laid him out on the floor near Brewster.

"Now to find Sonny," said Andy. They dashed through the long corridor leading back from the control room along the keel of the ship, into the crew's dining room and, after searching through half a dozen of the crew's sleeping cabins, found him bound and gagged in one of the hammocks. The poor youngster was so stiff from his long imprisonment that they had to rub his hands and feet before he could stand up.

"Come on, kid, there's no time to lose," exclaimed Sam, kindly, and with a hand under his arm, he helped the boy back to the control room.

The two forward engines were still churning over at slow speed. Under the thrust of

their propellers the "Britain" had passed over the yacht and was now three or four miles to the south of the speeding black boat, which had turned around and headed after them at full speed, throwing great waves of foamy white to each side of her knife-like bow.

Andy's last hurried twist of the elevator wheel had raised the flippers at too great an angle. The dirigible was nosed up, climbing slowly but steadily. Andy cast a hurried glance at the altimeter as he dashed for the wheel. Seventy-one hundred feet. He suppressed a sudden impulse to valve out some gas to bring her back to a lower altitude. But no, he thought, what difference did it make? Might as well fly at that height as any other. And he knew that they should not waste any of the precious gas if it was possible to avoid it.

So he straightened the "Britain" out and headed south again, keeping clear of the yacht until they decided what to do with their unwelcome prisoners.

"All right, fellows," he said, at last, "shall we hold court martial?"

"No," said Sam, promptly. "Let's just heave them overboard."

"Golly, you are bloodthirsty!" laughed Sonny, who was beginning to feel perky again.

"Listen, Sam," demanded Andy. "Are you with me or against me?"

"With you, of course!" exclaimed the mechanic promptly.

"All right then, we can either keep those birds aboard until we land or are picked up by a warship and turn them over to the police, or we can do what we did at the Bay of Whales after they had tried to steal our plane near the South Pole."

"Well, that's just what I meant," exclaimed Sam. "They ought to go to jail, of course, but we haven't time to stand guard over them. Brewster, here, is as slippery as a snake and I'd never feel safe with him aboard. If we take him to land, we'll make the \$20,000 reward for saving the missing men, but it's worth my share of it to have the pleasure of booting him overboard. Let's put an umbrella on him and present him to his buddies in the yacht down there. Personally, I don't think they'll be very

glad to see him. They might even spank him, or something!"

Brewster had been listening in silence to the discussion. He rolled his head and said, in a pleading voice:

"You are not going to put us down there on the yacht, are you?"

"Nothing else *but*, you sweet thing!" grinned Sam. "I can't concentrate on my work while you are around. I don't like you. I don't like the way you part your hair. I don't like the neckties you wear. The way your ears stick out reminds me of the handles on a loving cup. No, precious, as much as I hate to, I think we'll have to part with you and your two treasures. I'm sure you'll be happier with a shipload of crooks than with us."

"But you can't do that!" objected Brewster. "Hanson will kill me after this!"

"Will he, now?" asked Sam, hopefully. "Well, well, well! I'll tell you a secret, then. That's exactly what I've been longing to do, but I'm unselfish enough to let someone else have that pleasure." He grinned from ear to ear. Then he turned to Sonny: "Run along,

kid, and get us the parachute packs. Come on, Andy, let's bring the radio-smasher up here, too."

In a few minutes they had returned to the control room with Matthews. One at a time they stood each of the three pirates on their feet, buckled them into their parachute harness and cut the lashings around their legs.

Andy turned the "Britain" in a great circle and headed back toward the yacht. Sam opened a door while Sonny stood guard over the prisoners with the automatic.

The "Britain" was now almost directly over the "Wanderer." Andy left the wheel, pushed Brewster, who was still protesting at the top of his voice, to the open door, while Sonny's gun pointed at the pirate's head. Then the boy cut the ropes which held Brewster's arms to his sides, put the release ring in his right hand and gave him a vigorous shove overboard. Sam and Andy leaned over the threshold to watch. The pirate's body dropped like a plummet, hurtling end over end, for three or four hundred feet. Then a tiny patch of white silk suddenly appeared between the falling man

and the dirigible. In another moment a great billowing cloud of fabric opened out and swayed gently in the breeze.

The "Wanderer" slowed down. From their lofty perch the two boys could see her crew dash for a lifeboat. Brewster would soon be among his comrades. A little wet, perhaps, and more than a little discomforted, but among his own kind, nevertheless.

In quick succession Stengel and Mitchell, who seemed no more anxious to make the jump than their leader, were unceremoniously shoved overboard after their leader.

Andy, Sam and Sonny watched then until all had dropped gently into the water. Brewster and Stengel had already been picked up by the "Wanderer's" lifeboat, which was now headed toward Mitchell, when Sam turned away, saying:

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, the question before the house at this moment is when do we eat? We may be marooned on a dirigible on its dizzy way to the North Pole and all that, but I'm far less interested in that than in the empty condition of my stomach!"

CHAPTER XIX

SAM COOKS A DINNER

"IF THIS ship stayed in the air for three or four days while Brewster and his gang were aboard, I guess she'll stay aloft while we eat," agreed Andy, for he, too, was as hungry as a bear. "You switch off the motors, Sam, and we'll see what there is aboard this ship in the way of food."

While Sam puffed his way to the engines, Andy levelled the great dirigible out, so that she would ride safely while they all deserted the control room. The "Wanderer" was now three or four miles away, for the brisk southerly wind was carrying the "Britain" along at a brisk pace. But as soon as the engines had been turned off, she rode as easily as a canoe on a millpond, without the slightest motion in the even flow of wind.

"Hadn't you better let me send a message saying we are safe?" asked Sonny, as the three

climbed the stairs leading up to the main dining saloon, two decks above.

Andy turned toward him in surprise.

"I'd forgotten that you hadn't seen the radio room since Matthews got through with it," he said, kindly. "You'd better have your lunch first. I'm afraid if you looked at your new office, it would take away your appetite."

The three boys, closely followed by Scotty, made their way through the tables in the beautiful restaurant to a little door on the opposite side. Sam plunged through, his instinct for food leading him straight on. Within the door was a serving pantry, lined on both sides with nests of dishes, silverware, trays and glassware. At the other end of the short room was the kitchen, a marvel of compactness and as complete as any the boys had ever seen. Electric stoves lined the outer wall. A mixing table stood in the middle of the room, over which, suspended from hooks, hung dozens and dozens of gleaming aluminum pans, kettles and skillets.

"Hey, you birds," called Sam, excitedly, "come here and ease your eyes with these!"

Andy and Sonny found the mechanic glancing into an immense electric refrigerator which covered the opposite wall. Within its capacious interior was a display of food that would have done justice to a well-equipped market. Great slabs of meat, dozens of pounds of butter, whole cheeses, eggs by the score, fresh vegetables of every variety, were all packed away in careful rows. There was enough food there, Andy realized, to feed a passenger list of one hundred and a crew of fifty.

"Pinch me, boys and girls," raved Sam, almost overcome by the sight of so many delicacies. "I'll bet I'll gain twenty pounds before we land!"

"You'll make too heavy a ballast if you do," laughed Andy. "When our gas runs low we'll have to heave you overboard."

"Yes, you will!" scoffed Sam. "Just toss me over the side and you'll walk to wherever it is we're going!"

Sonny discovered another pantry, the shelves of which were lined with canned foods. They read the labels curiously. Caviar, pate-de-fois-gras, anchovies, truffles and dozens of

other exotic foods were there for the taking.

“You fellows can have those cans and bottles,” stated Sam, positively, “but Scotty and I will stick to plain meats and vegetables, won’t we, pup?”

Scotty wagged his tail and seemed to smile all over as he watched Sam cut off a huge slice of raw meat. In another instant, the collie was having the best meal he had had since leaving Hillside and in his puppy mind he knew that from now on he would live well. Had he not helped to capture his master’s enemy?

Sam slipped off his greasy overalls and found a cook’s apron and cap in a drawer. Dressing up with these, he looked the part to perfection. Fat, happy, his eyes shining in fun, he rattled the pots and pans around, brandished a huge carving knife as he sliced off three mammoth beefsteaks, he looked and acted far more like a professional cook than like one of the most expert aviation mechanics in the world.

In half an hour the three sat down to a meal that was the finest they had ever tasted. Sam had raided the kitchen for everything to go

with a good meal, from soup to after-dinner mints. They ate in the great dining room, for Sam had insisted that their first meal be a real celebration.

"Well," said Andy, looking up at the mahogany staircase that swept up in a graceful curve to the balcony, "this is just one of the things you wouldn't believe! It's hard to imagine that we're more than a mile in the air!"

"Sure," agreed Sam, pushing his plate back with reluctance, "a mile up and several hundred miles from anywhere. Personally, I wouldn't be surprised if we got our dear little feet wet before we reached dry land again."

"Don't worry, Sam," replied Andy, cheerfully, "we've pulled out of some mighty bad places before and I think our luck is still with us. In fact, I'm sure of it."

"Does anybody know exactly where we are at this minute?" asked Sonny.

"Somewhere just south of the Arctic Circle, between Iceland and Norway, at a guess," said Andy. "Just before we reached the yacht, a thin layer of clouds covered the sun so I couldn't take an observation. I can see that they're

still there, too. We'll have a long twilight tonight and I may be able to get a shot at the sun. If not, the only thing we can do is head east by south and we're sure to hit land somewhere."

"I should hope so!" declared Sonny with real feeling.

"Listen, gang!" Sam spoke as if a brand new thought had occurred to him. "Do you realize that there is something like five millions in gold here in this ship and that if we succeed in bringing her down whole we'll share a reward of more than a million dollars!"

They looked at each other in silence. They had, of course, known that all the time, but in the excitement of recent events, they had forgotten all about it.

"Let's go and look at it," suggested Andy. They left the restaurant and went down to the corridor at the keel. They searched through the crew's quarters, but found nothing except the swinging hammocks for the men, whose personal belongings were left just as they had been when the hurry call had come for them to descend to the foot of the mooring mast at Lakehurst.

They retraced their steps and started back along the keel corridor. At each interval of forty or fifty feet they found ladders which led up to an entrance to the main envelope. Climbing the first ladder they found themselves looking upward through the dim light in the interior of the mammoth ship to the very roof of the envelope many, many, feet above. From stem to stern the entire hull was ringed and crisscrossed by tremendous lattice-work girders.

“Golly,” murmured Sam, in amazement, “it’s like looking up at the Brooklyn bridge.”

It seemed unbelievable that this huge mass of metal and fabric could actually float in the air. She looked as heavy as a battleship. To right and left of the boys stretched twenty balloons, all held tightly in their proper places by the cross braces, each of them filled with gas and constantly pressing upward against the metal work at the top.

“Gee,” said Sonny. “I had an idea that the whole inside of a dirigible was just one big gas bag.”

"No," said Andy, "it is divided into a number of smaller bags so that if one breaks, all the gas won't escape."

They resumed their search for the bullion and were, at last, rewarded by the sight of dozens and dozens of little steel boxes piled up in a room just over the corridor.

"That doesn't look like five million dollars," said Sam, dubiously, bending down to lift one of the boxes. He heaved, raised the end of the box a few inches, then lowered it with a grunt. "I've heard that gold is heavy, so I believe it at last. That's gold! Boys we're millionaires!"

He started to prance and cavort about, until Andy said with a smile:

"Not 'till we land, we aren't!"

"Right you are, as ever!" replied Sam, cooling down. "Well, let's get this old hooker going the nearest way to land."

CHAPTER XX

FLYING LESSONS

THE "Wanderer" was out of sight on the southern horizon when the three boys and the collie returned to the control room. The clear blue sky of the morning had changed to a steel gray twilight. The surface of the water was flecked with countless millions of whitecaps.

"Well, there's only one thing to do," announced Andy, "and that's to get started. Sam, you start all five of the engines. We'll run them at half speed until we learn how to fly this gas bag. When she goes fast, it takes two men to run the steering and elevating wheels, to say nothing of all these other gadgets around here that probably mean something. Then come back here and lend a hand with the steering."

"You, Sonny," he directed, when Sam had left for his motor cars, "had better see what can be done to the radio set. Before Matthews

left, he smashed up everything in sight. It may be that you can't do a thing. If so, forget it and help us run the ship."

Scotty curled himself at Andy's feet and, as his master twirled the steering wheel to head the "Britain" toward the southeast and Europe, he fell sound asleep, to dream of miles and miles of open refrigerators, all filled with red, juicy beefsteaks.

The air speed meter near Andy's head indicated ten, twenty, then thirty miles an hour. There was a hardly perceptible vibration that told him the five engines had buckled down to their work. The wind still came in a steady, even current and it was not difficult to keep the ship straight on her course and on an even keel. Darkness fell very slowly. They were not far, Andy realized, from the Land of the Midnight Sun.

Sam returned and lounged silently in the control room, studying the various dials, gauges and instruments with the experienced eyes of a master mechanic. He touched this, waited for results, then touched that. Before long he saw a strand of wires which ran across

the roof and into the envelope of the ship. He found a pocket flash lamp and followed the wires to their very end, observing their meaning and their use. He investigated the ballast tanks, measured their capacity and estimated the amount and weight of the water that had been used. In short, he learned the meaning of many of the unknown instruments and intended to keep on until he had become familiar with everything aboard ship.

“Come here, Sam,” called Andy, “and try these controls for a while. You know how to fly an airplane; now learn to fly the biggest airship in the world. We are likely to be in the air for some time and we’ll have to sleep sooner or later.”

While Andy operated the elevator, Sam steered the ship. After a few moments during which he had overcontrolled the ship, causing her to veer wildly off her course, Sam caught the knack, declaring that it was just like steering a motor boat. Then Andy steered while Sam worked the elevator wheel. The nose rose and dipped several times, then at the end of fifteen minutes, Sam decided that he could

steer the whole thing provided that Andy would keep her high enough to prevent him from plunging into the water in a careless moment. The boy then turned both controls over to him and watched him for an hour or more, until he was at last satisfied that Sam could manage fairly well.

“That’s fine, Sam,” he said. “Now give your engines a last examination, if you wish, and turn in. I’ll wake you at midnight and if it isn’t rough, you can fly her for a few hours while I catch up on my sleep.”

After protesting that he needed no sleep for another day or two, Sam left the control room. Fifteen minutes later, the telephone buzzed. When Andy lifted the receiver, Sam’s excited voice came over the line.

“Andy, you have no idea! I’ve just taken a nice bath! I picked myself out a cabin that has twin beds, Persian rugs, a private bath, plate glass mirrors over everything and listen—I have a door here leading out to an upper deck! Would you believe it! I can take one of these wicker chairs right out on deck, if I like! Of course, there’s a big glass enclosure

around the deck, but it's the last word, the very last word!"

Andy laughed when the mechanic had cut off. Trust Sam to find the humor in the roughest situation and to be as excited and delighted as a child with a bright new toy when he found anything unusual! He was wonderful company, good old Sam, and a tower of strength in an emergency.

He rang the buzzer leading to the wireless room. Sonny's voice answered.

"How are you making out, ivory dome?"

"Oh, Andy, it's perfectly terrible!" wailed Sonny. "Everything is smashed to bits! I've been working and working, but I don't think I can ever make anything out of the wreckage."

"Well, don't you worry. Come up here, will you, old timer?"

The youngster, looking worn and haggard, entered the control room shortly.

"Listen, son," said Andy, gently. "Don't you worry one minute about that set. We can fly whether it is in order or not. Now I'd like you to go up to the cabins, bring down three or four blankets and a pillow and make a bed for

yourself right here beside me where we can be company for each other. There isn't another thing you can do tonight and you need your sleep."

A few minutes later the boy returned, his arms stuffed with blankets and pillows.

"Gee," he grinned, "the whole place back there is lighted up like Broadway and 42nd Street. Sam's asleep in a soft bed with a broad smile on his face. I never saw anyone look so happy in my life. Come here, Scotty!"

The pup opened one brown eye, saw Sonny on his makeshift bed and staggered over to him, tail wagging, then burrowed deep under the blankets.

Night came at last, pitch black night without even the friendly pin pricks of the stars to relieve the darkness. Andy steered the great ship with the guidance of the instruments alone, the compass, altimeter, the spirit levels and the air speed indicators. He noted that as soon as darkness had fallen the "Britain" gradually lost altitude as the cold air chilled the gases in the bags. He nosed up slightly, not wishing to drop ballast if it could be helped.

Little by little, however, the pointer on the altimeter sagged downward until it reached a thousand feet, when he dared not allow her to settle lower. He feared that under his inexperienced hand at the elevator wheel she might hit the sea during one of her gentle plunges.

He experimented very cautiously with the ballast release valves, watching altimeter and spirit level with great care. At first the nose rose as he dropped a small quantity of water from the forward tanks, then, turning the valves at the other end of the bright and shining row, he felt the deck beneath his feet become level and saw the bubble in the spirit level assume its normal position. The altimeter showed that she was rising and he assisted in the process by twirling the elevator wheel to point the flippers up. At length she had reached ten thousand feet and he straightened her out.

The chill of the night air percolated into the cabin. He snapped on the electric lights and searched for an electric heater of the type used on the "Apex." He found none, but saw a row of steam or hot water radiators along

the wall which, he judged, were warmed by the radiators of the engines. He opened the valves and soon the cold, biting air of the cabin had been changed into a comfortable warmth that enabled him to discard his heavy coveralls.

There was no moon; the stars were invisible behind the heavy clouds; he could see nothing at all on the other side of the heavy plate glass windows. So he left the cabin lights on. It was less lonesome and strange with their cheerful glow. For the first time in his flying career, Andy was conscious of a strange uneasiness, a loneliness, a home-sickness for the roaring, thundering, plunging "Apex" instead of this immense, silent, luxurious monster of the air which he now commanded.

Here he was, surrounded by the greatest comfort that had ever been carried into the sky, untold quantities of rich food, his choice of fifty de luxe cabins to sleep in, the latest known devices for safety and convenience, yet the very magnificence and splendor of it all contrasted strangely with the fact that he, Sam, Somy and the pup were alone in the mammoth airship, trying to navigate her

through unknown and unfriendly northern skies.

He felt small and helpless as he stood there, holding this tremendous ship on her course. He and his two companions, who had never before stepped foot within an airship, trying to do what was a man sized job for experienced officers and a crew of fifty! It was as though they had found the transatlantic liner "Leviathan" deserted in mid-ocean and had attempted, single handed, to sail her in to her port! At any other time he would have roared with laughter at the very thought of such a scatter-brained idea. But here he was, actually trying to accomplish an almost impossible feat! He shivered a little, though the cabin was now warm and comfortable.

CHAPTER XXI

FOG

“LAND ho!” yelled Sam, two mornings later, as he peered through the dense fog which had completely enveloped the “Britain” for the past forty hours.

“Where?” asked Andy, his pulses tingling.

“Straight ahead!”

Scotty barked and cavorted in excitement, having realized from the tone of his master’s voice that something unusual had happened. Andy brushed a hand across his tired, blood-shot eyes and stared through the swirling gray vapor that hung in front of the windows like an army blanket. Yes, there, directly in front of their bow was a darker patch of gray which grew and grew in size as the airship approached. Now and then wisps of fog floated aside and the two boys saw tiny patches of green. Land! Andy’s heart beat wildly.

"What do you say, shall we try to put her down?" asked Sam.

"Gee, I don't know!" replied Andy, doubtfully. "If I only had some idea where we are! We haven't had a sight at the sun since we boarded her. We don't know how much the wind has blown us off our course. We may be over Norway or over Spain. We've used up all our ballast and there's only enough gas left in the bag to keep us at a thousand feet. The sensible thing, of course, would be to land, but somehow I hate to. We've come this far and I'd like to take the ship back to her home."

"So would I," agreed Sam. "There's another thing, too. We've won the million dollars reward, although I can't seem to realize it yet. But it's worth another \$100,000 to us to return the 'Britain' to her owners undamaged. That can only be done at a landing field where there are plenty of men to grab the ropes. But I hate to toss \$100,000 overboard."

"Right you are!" said Andy. "The worst we can do is to wreck her trying to get to Croydon and we'd do that anyway if we tried to land her here. Let's go."

He stepped to the telephone and rang up the wireless room. Sonny answered promptly.

"We've sighted land, kid!"

"Hooray!"

"We're going to keep going until the ship sinks so low we can't clear hills and mountains. She's pretty low now, not more than a thousand feet. What are the chances for fixing the radio set so we can send a message before long?"

"Gee, Andy, I'm working as fast as I can. But I don't think I'll be through before tonight. And then we'll only be able to send three or four hundred miles."

"All right, ivory head, stay with it!" Andy cut off.

The fog seemed to be growing lighter as the great airship plowed inland, still keeping to her southeasterly course. Since the boys did not know whether they were to the north or south of England, there was no sense in changing direction until they were certain. The wind might have shifted at any time during the blind two days of flight. It might have swung to the north and blown them hundreds of miles to

the southward. So Andy kept the bow straight ahead, hoping to pick up some landmark that would give him an idea of his position. He dared not nose down lest a mountain should loom up ahead of them and there would not be enough reserve buoyancy in the gas to carry them up and over it. There was nothing to do but to keep her as she was and to hope for the best.

A great chunk of fog enveloped them in a dense wet shroud, then, suddenly, they were flying through clear air. The sun was still overcast, but the earth beneath was disclosed in a wide, gorgeous panorama. Another cloud of fog loomed into sight dead ahead. In a moment they would be engulfed again. Andy left the wheel and studied the country beneath intently. They were flying over a great peninsula that stuck straight out into the ocean. To right and to left, stretching as far north and south as the eye could reach, were dozens and dozens of great bays and indentations in the coastline. The scenery was wild beyond description. The rock-bound cliffs bordering the shaggy coastline were hundreds of feet high

and broken as though turned up by a giant's plow. Behind the "Britain," scores of islands dotted the shore.

Although Andy and Sam watched until they were again blinded by a curtain of fog, they saw no town, village nor house. The land was desolate and uninhabited. As the gray blanket swept around the observation windows once more, the two looked at each other in puzzled silence.

"Sam!" suddenly exclaimed Andy. "If I remember anything about my geography at school, those were the fiords of Norway! Don't you remember the pictures of them in your school books?"

"No," replied the mechanic, his round face gloomy. "They only looked like a whole flock of bad news to me!"

But Andy did not hear him, he was studying the map, measuring distances and drawing faint lines with a soft pencil. Then he dashed back to the steering wheel and spun it vigorously, watching the compass card slowly wheel about until the letter S was at the lubber line.

"I'm going to play out my hunch, old timer,"

he said, excitedly. "We'll head due south for a while. If I'm right in my guess, that will take us to Holland."

"I thought you were trying to find England?"

"We are, but we've got to miss the high mountains of Scotland or we'll clip off the tops of the first few we meet. We'll play safe and give Scotland a wide, wide berth. Holland and Belgium are flat so we'll try to ease along there and then try to dope out the right time to fly across the Channel to England. If worst comes to worst, we might be able to collect big enough crowds in either Holland, Belgium or France to make a landing."

"Suit yourself," replied the mechanic. "I can keep the engines working, but darned if I can keep this bag of air in the sky if she wants to come down."

All that day and far into the night the "Britain" crawled at reduced speed to the southward through the dense fog. It seemed to Andy that they must be carrying the fog with them. He hoped that a sudden change of wind was not carrying them out to sea or into the interior of Europe where saw-toothed

mountain ranges might reach up to empale them. He watched the altimeter anxiously. Little by little, the "Britain" was losing height. The pointer held at 750 feet, now, and the pilot strained his eyes through the fog, watchful lest he crash into the side of a hill.

He was tired. He did not remember when he had been half so tired. But there was no thought of sleep for any of them. Sam roamed through the thousand foot length of the ship like a restless cat, examining everything for the hundredth time. He had almost lost interest in his food, which showed, better than the fullest description, how the lonely voyage was worrying the mechanic. But there was no mechanical detail of the entire complicated structure that escaped his keen eyes.

Sonny was still absorbed in his radio set. He reported by telephone every hour or two and, now and then, curled up on the bunk in the wireless room for a brief nap. But he would not even take time off to eat until Sam had, at last, carried a tray of the most appetizing dishes he could find to the boy and had stood over him while he ate, threatening to

lock him out of the wireless room if he did not finish everything on his plate.

As Andy stood at the wheel just after midnight, arms and legs so weary he could scarcely stand and move the spokes, there was a sudden burst of band music that filled the entire cabin. The effect was startling. At one moment, the black cabin was utterly silent, except for the faint purring of the motors somewhere in the rear of the ship. In the next, there was a sound as though a full dance orchestra had entered the lonely room, playing with a zest and a life that was infectious.

CHAPTER XXII

ENGLAND

AFTER the first startled shock of surprise, Andy shouted aloud with joy. Sonny had switched his set into the broadcast range, as he had done so many time to relieve the monotony of the long voyages in the airplanes. Then the music stopped and the telephone bell sounded.

“Andy,” came Sonny’s joyous voice. “I’m nearly finished! I’ve got the receiver working and I’ll have the sending set working in a couple of hours. So long!” He cut off in haste and switched on the loudspeaker again before Andy could congratulate him on his wonderful work.

Sam came dashing into the room just as the band picked up the jazz tune again. The very fact that they were in contact with the world again acted as a tonic to the chubby mechanic. He grabbed Andy away from the wheels and

started to turkey-trot him all over the cabin. Scotty entered into the spirit of things and barked and capered about on his clumsy feet as though he were about to have a fit. At last Sam released the boy, laughing, and stood at the elevator wheel, listening to the music and smiling from ear to ear.

At last the music broke off with a final discord. The announcer's smooth voice, tinged with a strong British accent, filled the cabin.

"Station 2LO on the air. We regret to say that we have no additional news of the dirigible 'Britain,' in which the young American flier, Andy Lane, and his two companions are feared to have been lost. Reports have come to us of the sound of motors over Stavanger, Norway, and over the North Sea. These reports are being investigated, but it is not wise to be too hopeful until further information is obtained."

There was a moment's silence and then he suddenly came on the air again, his excitement clearly betrayed in his voice.

"Ladies and gentlemen! We have a partially confirmed report that the unmistakable sound of a dirigible's motors has been heard

over Rotterdam, Holland. Amsterdam, Holland, also reports having heard the sound a little earlier in the evening. If these reports are true, we must believe that it is the 'Britain' in the air, since nearly all commercial and military flying has been stopped since early morning because of the heavy fog. We are trying to verify these reports, which seem too good to be true. We will report again as soon as further bulletins are received."

"Oh, Sister Susie!" whooped Sam, "it won't be long, now! It won't be long, now!"

But Andy was already studying his charts again. The telephone buzzed again. Sam answered it, then reported to Andy.

"Sonny says he's had his loop antenna on those signals from 2LO, which is London, England. He says the station is now due west of us."

"All right," said Andy, excitedly. "That means that we're now almost at the northern border of Belgium. We may as well swing west, and ease across the Channel."

They turned the bow to the west and continued on their slow flight, feeling safer, now,

for they knew that for the time at least, there was no danger of hitting obstacles. The low-lying land of Holland and the waters of the Channel offered no dangers as long as they were able to stay in the air.

Through the blackness they poked their way, happy, now, for they felt that the end of their perilous trip was close at hand.

"Tell Sonny to stop trying to repair the set," said Andy, at last. "They must be listening for us everywhere in England, and as soon as we get over the coast line they'll hear us and turn on the lights at Croydon. Tell him to keep his loop pointed toward that broadcasting station and report its bearing every few minutes. In that way we'll be able to guess at our position pretty well."

So on through the darkness, the jazz band from one of London's night clubs cheering their blundering path across the foggy, pitch black sky.

Andy's chief worry, now, was their height. The weather was still calm; he had little to fear in the actual steering of the ship. But she was losing altitude rapidly, and there was no

ballast left. His maps showed that there were hills between Croydon and the coast and he feared greatly that they would not be able to clear them. He glanced again at the altimeter, his brows furrowed in anxiety.

“Sam,” he said, at last, “we’ll have to get rid of some weight, somehow. We’ll lose another hundred feet or more before morning and we’ll begin to scrape the tops of things when we hit England. You’d better go through the ship and begin to throw out stuff we don’t need. Telephone me every few minutes and when you’ve thrown out enough to bring her up a bit, pile some more things close to the window.”

Sam disappeared in the direction of the crew’s quarters. Andy watched the altimeter intently. For some time there was no change, but at length the hand began to crawl upwards. At the same time, however, the bubble on the spirit level began to move over to the forward end of the glass tube. The bow was lifting much faster than the stern.

When Sam telephoned that he had thrown most of the hammocks and tables in the crew’s

quarters overboard, Andy told him to go to the stern and heave over something from that part of the ship to raise the rear and level her out, but when the next call came, Sam reported that there was nothing in the stern to throw out. She would have to stay as she was.

So, her bow riding high and her stern low, the "Britain" wandered on through the night. According to the altimeter, the control cabin was now at 1,000 feet, but because of the position of the ship, he figured that the stern was barely 600 feet above the water. They emptied the rear gasoline tank, then, which brought the tail up somewhat, but Andy knew that his margin of safety was very slight indeed.

Far over on the left there was a white glow in the fog. Andy watched it for some moments, then shouted in sudden relief.

"There is the reflection of a town, Sam! Look, over there! We are just where I hoped we'd be, flying straight into the mouth of the Thames. That must be Margate, or one of the other towns on the shore."

Sonny's reports came in regularly. The broadcasting station was still straight ahead of

them. So they plowed ahead. The fog was brighter, now, as the reflections of one town after another shone up through the clouds.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” came the voice of 2LO, as a waltz was suddenly cut off in the midst of a bar. “The sound of a dirigible’s engines has been reported by telephone from Margate, Sheerness and Gravesend. If the approaching ship is, as we believe, the missing dirigible, it is almost within sight of London,”

Then, with a suddenness that made Andy’s heart almost stop beating, the voice said, “Andy Lane! If it is you and your intrepid crew who are sailing up the Thames river, we greet you in the name of Great Britain! If for any reason you can hear this message, yet cannot send with your set, we beg that you will turn your motors on and off two or three times as a signal. To any of those on the ground who can now hear the engines of the dirigible:—If its motors are turned on and off as we have requested, will you kindly let us know?”

Sam dashed back toward his engine cars. In a few minutes the tachometers swung their pointers back and forth and the steady hum

of the engines lifted and died, lifted and died, then resumed their even vibration. There was a ten minute silence while Andy, jubilant, steered his ship dead ahead. Sam returned, bringing the happy-faced Sonny with him. The set was tuned in. There was nothing more the devoted boy could do. He might as well share in the excitement in the control room.

“Andy Lane!” roared the voice from the loudspeaker. The announcer seemed as happy as the three boys in the “Britain.” “We hope to express our delight later. Now we wish to assist you in landing. The officials at the Croydon airport ask that you head a trifle more to the south to counteract the southerly wind which is blowing.” Andy grinned at his companions and twirled the wheel in response to the invisible command. “Ladies and gentlemen,” the voice went on, “Andy Lane and his crew have brought the ‘Britain’ back to our shores. We thank him. We wish to tell him that the Ambassador from the United States is now speeding toward Croydon to meet him. We are in receipt of a radio message from Mr. Lamson, pilot of the amphibian flying boat

‘Apex.’ He is safe at Copenhagen and will take off at the first break in the fog to join you at Croydon. Weather authorities predict that the fog will lift in the morning.’

The reflections from the lights became much more noticeable, now. Andy looked at his charts and relief maps, doubtfully.

“Sam, beat it and throw out some more stuff,” he snapped. “Take Sonny with you. Quick, we’re coming to some hills!”

Sam and Sonny raced for the door. Andy suddenly saw lights straight ahead. Not the mere reflections of lights, but the actual bulbs. Through the fog, he could make out the rounded black-and-white roofs of the houses etched in the shadows. They seemed to be reaching up for the stern of the “Britain.” Would the boys be too late? Would the great ship end her wandering in a limp, crumpled mass on some British hillside? He held his breath as the danger approached nearer and nearer. He dared not take his eyes away to look at the altimeter. He swung hard down on the wheel to steer to the left. Then, at last, he felt the ship rise. Slowly, laboriously, she lifted, bow

first, as though she were being pulled up by her bow on a mighty block and chain. Andy peered out of the rear windows, looked down at the sagging stern. For a moment, his heart almost ceased beating. It looked as though the tail and elevators were going to crunch down into the midst of the little village. But no, it missed the roofs by inches.

The bow rose higher and higher as the working boys tossed chairs and tables straight through the glass of the dining room windows. The stern rose, too, but the tilt of the mammoth ship was becoming more and more dangerous. In another hundred miles, if she were afloat at all, she would almost be standing on end.

"Andy Lane," came the announcer's voice, "the listening devices at Croydon can now hear your motors. You should be able to see the lights of the airport."

Once again Andy directed his attention straight ahead. Yes, the end was in sight. The fog ahead was almost as light as day. The suffused beams of gigantic searchlights pointed thousands and thousands of feet into the sky.

Millions of candle power in floodlights blazed through the glistening fog.

Andy pressed the buttons of the telephone. Sam answered.

“We’re almost there, now. Stop tossing things out and kill the three rear engines. Cut the first two to one-quarter speed. Send Sonny up here.”

In a few minutes Sonny appeared.

“Get those coils of rope ready to toss out, kid. Open the windows. Then beat it along the keel corridor and throw down any coils of rope you see. Some of them will be the right ones.”

CHAPTER XXIII

JOURNEY'S END

A NEW voice entered the cabin through the loudspeaker.

"This is Station 2LO, announcing from the Croydon Air Port. We can now see the dim outline of the 'Britain' through the fog. She is flying at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees, her bow pointing high into the air. But she is coming this way and a large crew is running toward her, hoping that her crew will drop the landing ropes for them to grasp."

Andy left the wheel, dashed to the coils of rope that stood by the open windows and tossed them overboard. Yes, he was over the airport now. He could see the blurred figures of many men in the blazing fog below. As they clustered around beneath the hull, he pressed the buzzer for Sam to kill the forward motors. Then he reached up to the valve levers and released great quantities of gas from the for-

ward envelopes. The bow settled fast, the stern slowly. He watched the lights come up to meet him, becoming less blurred with each foot that the cabin descended. A little more gas, now. Ah, they had caught the ropes. He could feel the pressure of the straining hands as the bag settled and turned toward the wind in tow of the ropes.

Sam and Sonny ran into the room. Scotty barked frantically. The voice from the loud-speaker was excited.

"The ground crew have the 'Britain' safely in hand, ladies and gentlemen. There is a tremendous excitement here at the field. We can see the faces of two boys, a man and a dog in the control cabin of the airship. They are Andy Lane, Samuel Allen, the mechanic, and David Collins, Jr., the fifteen-year-old radio operator. Also a collie puppy, Scotty, the mascot.

"There are several thousand people here on the field and the crowds are increasing fast. The roads in every direction are black with motor cars. It is rumored that the Prince of Wales has just entered the gates.

“There is no sign of the three passengers who were carried away when the ‘Britain’ was blown away from Lakehurst.

“I see the Minister of the Exchequer here. He is interested in the million pounds of bullion aboard the airship. If it is still there, how fortunate will be the saviors of the ‘Britain’ and how much lustre they will have added to their already famous names! There is a fortune in rewards already awaiting them, for they have rescued the ship and probably the money.

“Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the Prince of Wales *is* here! He is hurrying toward the cabin of the ‘Britain,’ arm in arm with the American Ambassador——”

Andy turned toward his two companions and shook hands, silently.

“Glad Joe and Dick will be here tomorrow,” he said. “They deserve as much credit as we do. Golly, I’m scared of these celebrations! Look, they’re opening the door! Come here, Scotty! Sonny, pull in your ears! Here comes the Prince of Wales”

